

The AMSTRAD ACTION Subs Club Newsletter...

issue 1



First of all, a big "hello" to all our subscribers! At the last count there were something like 5,000 of you out there, so we're talking pretty big numbers here. It just goes to show what a loyal readership Amstrad Action has...

Which has certainly been borne out by the latest ABC figures - 37,120. These are higher than they have been



• Amstrad Action's circulation is now at its highest point since 1989 - not bad for a 'declining' market!

Welcome to the first ever *Amstrad Action* Subs Club Newsletter, introduced by the Ed, ROD LAWTON. This is a special monthly bulletin which will be sent out to subscribers only. In it you will find all the latest gossip from AA Towers, plus an assortment of compos, subs news, reviews, news, letters and more...

since 1989, and only the second highest in Amstrad Action's history.

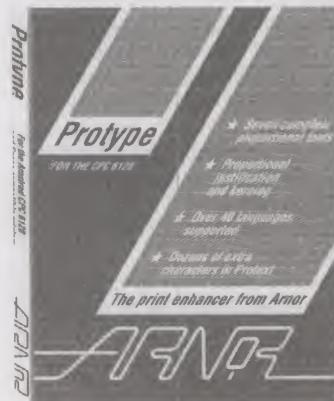
This is all the more amazing when you consider that the Amstrad is supposed to represent a 'declining' market. While it's true that many of the major software houses (we're talking games at the moment) have pulled out of the Amstrad market, the machines' owners are still very active. While the results from our giant reader survey have yet to be fully collated, it looks like the average AA reader buys between one and five full price games per year and between five and ten budget games.

So why are more and more High Street shops ceasing to stock Amstrad games? Part of the reason is that the industry as a whole has finally talked itself into believing the 8-bit market is 'dead'. It's a chicken-and-egg situation. Games are selling in smaller numbers but is that because they're harder to get hold of?

And you have to remember that 8-bit games don't offer the same profit margin as the more expensive 16-bit games and

- especially - Nintendo and Sega console games. Computer games on various formats are always fighting for limited shelf space and it's not surprising that the games that yield the highest profit margins and shift faster will get priority.

On the serious side, things are gloomier still. It's been some time since a major new serious product appeared on



• **Prototype** is the only serious release from a first-division publisher for a long time, but interest in the CPC as a serious tool continues.

the Amstrad (Arnor's *Protype* was the last, and that's merely an addition to the *Protext* family).

The trouble is that everyone has been brainwashed into thinking that the PC is the *only* serious computer to buy. After all, it's what they use in offices everywhere, isn't it?

When the CPC range was launched, the PC was nowhere in the running as a home micro. It wasn't until Amstrad itself launched the first 'affordable' PC that people began to take an interest. Soon, a PC cost little more than a CPC and other home micros - the software publishers were all lured away by the prospect of larger sales and greater profits (just look at the cost of PC software!).

The point is, though, that the CPC can do many things just as well as the PC. Some even better.

Take word processing, for example. How fast can you type? No-one can type fast enough to outpace even the humble CPC. What's the biggest file you've ever written? 20K? The CPC can handle that, but you'd have to be daft to

READER SURVEY: EARLY RESULTS

Remember the Giant 1992 Survey form we printed in the February issue? Well we've had an absolutely massive response - nearly 1,500 replies, in fact!

Due to the sheer numbers of forms coming back, plus the quantity of information we asked for, it's going to take us a few weeks to work through all your forms. However, we have accumulated quite a lot of data already from around 300 of the replies.

For a start, we've found out that about 55% of you own CPC464s, while only about 15% of readers own a Plus or a GX4000.

We also discovered that nearly all our readers are male. The final fig-

ure looks like being somewhere near 95%! Come on all you girls, where are you?

The most popular sections in the magazine include Action Test, Reaction and Forum. Bad news for adventures and machine code fans, though - Balrog and Mastering Machine Code came in bottom of the list. Oh dear.

The range of ages that read *Amstrad Action* proved fascinating too. By far the largest group is the 12-16 year olds. Next largest, so far, looks like being the 8-12s. The 16-20s are next and then the figures tail off slowly. Surprisingly, though, around 10% of our readers are over 50!

It also looks as if there's a strong correlation between a reader's age and his or her interests. Those under 20 years of age are interested almost exclusively in games, while those over 20 are only interested in the CPC's serious side.

As far as we can tell, about two thirds of our readers are games fans, while the remaining third is heavily into the machine's more serious uses.

These figures are tending to confirm what we thought was true anyway, but it's nice to have the figures to back it up. Possibly most interesting was the information on the games/serious interest split. On the basis of the forms we'd had back

so far, we think we've got the balance just about right - and most of you seem to agree.

Change the face of Amstrad Action!

Now's your chance to change the face of *Amstrad Action* as we head into 1992. The Amstrad market is changing all the time and we want to keep up with it. So although we want to keep up with our readers, we want to know what machine you have and what you do with it. For who knows, you might be the future of *Amstrad Action*. In fact, we want to know everything about you and your computing!



GIANT 1992 SURVEY

FILL IN THIS FORM!

Fill in the form on the left and send it back to us. We'll use your responses to help us change the look of *Amstrad Action* for 1992. It's quick and easy to do, and we hope you'll be part of the future of the magazine.

Don't forget, we're not sending *Amstrad Action* to your name and address.

Goodies to be won!

And we're giving away lots of great prizes. Just fill in the survey page, drop it in the post and you could be in with a chance of winning one of the great prizes.

Amstrad Action 1992 Special Edition Future Publishing P.R.E.P.O.S.T. Bath, Avon BA1 3XV

be playing around with files that big and cumbersome on any machine. And what about print quality? This is an easy one. The CPC can drive any Epson-compatible printer – the same as most PCs.

To see what I mean, take a look at the phenomenal success of Amstrad's PCW range. Countless thousands of people bought these dedicated word processing machines (very similar inside to the CPC, as a matter of fact) and have been using them happily ever since. So what if PCs are more powerful? Who needs it?

Computer users can get hoodwinked just like hi-fi owners. Remember when you could still buy vinyl records in the High Street? Now you can only buy CDs which, incidentally, cost about half as much again...

But can you tell the difference? Usually no. But because people know there is a difference (in theory), they're convinced they can hear one. Or at least, they're convinced they'll be left behind if they don't buy a CD player...

(Calm down, Rod! – Adam)

The point of all this, as far as I'm concerned is that the public has been hoodwinked yet again by the trade. We're all being talked into buying computers we don't need running software we can't afford.

Which is why I'm so pleased that AA's sales figures are holding up – increasing, for that matter. The CPC/Plus is an excellent all-purpose machine that serves as an ideal introduction to computing for beginners, while proving a versatile and powerful tool for more serious users.

In short, the CPC is still the all-purpose home computer, at least as far as we're concerned. And we aim to continue to reflect its wide range of uses and abilities for as long as there are loyal CPC owners out there to buy the magazine.

And that, readers, is you.

Drop us a line!

We'll be printing letters from subscribers in this newsletter, so if you've got an opinion you want airing, send it to us. We can't guarantee to print every letter, but since this newsletter is for subscribers only, you stand a good chance of making your views known.

The address to write to is: AA Subs Club, Amstrad Action, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The best letter each month will win a prize (though we don't know what the prize will be yet).

Down the pub with Adam and Rod

ADAM PETERS reports on the board-level discussions over the redesigned *Amstrad Action*. Here is his on-the-spot account...

Scene: The saloon bar of The Pie & Pumpkin, next to the AA offices. In one corner, huddled over their drinks, lurk two familiar characters – the one with the silly haircut and the one with the beard. Let us pause a while and listen in on their conversation...

Rod: So what do you reckon to the redesign then?

Adam: It's okay. The typeface is a lot better – it's much easier to read.

Rod: Hmm... it looks a lot more modern, too. That *Behind the Scenes* feature in the last issue looked quite good.

Adam: Yeah. Just as long as none of the readers find out it's all a lie and we really write the mag on an old typewriter in the attic of a strange old man with a limp.

Rod: Er, yes. Are you still taking the lie-down after lunch that the doctor advised, Adam?

Adam: Never mind that, these glasses are empty.

Rod: Yeah, they won't let us have any more drinks until we pay off our bar tab.

Adam: Oh dear, how much is it?

Rod: Just over £6,000.

Adam: Crikey. We could organise an appeal or something, try and get the readers to stump up the cash.

Rod: Good idea. Anyway, let's go through the magazine section-by-section. What do you think of the coverpage pages?

Adam: We need more space. At the

moment the instructions are just too brief. And we should whack in loads of 'tips & tactics' boxes and stuff like that.

Rod: Yeah.

Adam: What do you think of Amscene?

Rod: It looks excellent. Probably the best looking bit in the mag.

Adam: You're only saying that because you wrote it.

Rod: Pardon?

Adam: I said, everyone's saying that it must be you who wrote it.

Rod: Well, gosh, I mean, we have to pay attention to what people say, of course. Ahem. Reaction is a bit of an odd one, isn't it? Some people have been moaning about it getting too silly, but a lot more seem to like it much better now.

Adam: We're certainly getting more mail than ever. You know, I think Grapevine is brilliant now, with all the separate bits. Charts, gossip, previews, photos, etc...

Rod: Adam, why do you always put 'etc' at the end of every list you write or say?

Adam: I don't know. Tradition, laziness, habit, pure chance, etc.

Rod: Good grief, Adam, there's nothing worse than people who generalise. Anyway, *Technical Forum* looks like it could build into a bit of a goodie.

Adam: Yeah. The new WACCI column, starting in the June issue, will also help expand our techie coverage.

Rod: Yes. We're going to have to make sure we don't let our serious coverage slip at all, especially if this rumour about ACU is true.

Adam: What rumour is that?

Rod: Apparently it's going to be re-launched as a games-only mag called CPC Attack.

Adam: Hmm, I'll believe that when I see it.

Rod: Well, we'll find out for sure soon enough. If they go ahead, it's a pity they didn't do a reader survey first... [see overleaf for some early results from our Giant 1991 Survey]

Adam: We need to expand the Cheat Mode section too as soon as we get a chance.

Rod: Too right. I want to try to make space for more maps if I can. Moving on, the new BASIC tutorial in Type-Ins looks good, as does the Buyers' Guide.

Adam: Yeah, and the 'new look' Aafterthought looks dead smart as well.

Rod: It certainly is. Are we really going to be doing all those things next month, Adam?

Adam: Definitely. If everything goes according to plan, that is.

Rod: It looks like a lot of work.

Adam: We've got to give the readers as much value for money as possible. With the reduced number of advertisers around these days, the issues are bound to get smaller – we really do need to work on new ways for packing in even more information than ever... wait a minute, what did you say just then?

Rod: I said, it looks like a lot of work.

Adam: Yeah, but between us...

Rod: Ah, no, but I meant to tell you about this. You see...

Adam: You mean I've got to write this lot myself?

Rod: Not at all! I'll do some of the captions...

To be continued...

Win a compilation!

This little competition is exclusive to subscribers to *Amstrad Action*. The prize is Domark's excellent (well, reasonable) *Superheroes* compilation. Well, we call it a competition, but it's pretty darned simple. The thing is, Adam's got a bit of a sweet tooth. And he's a bit partial to boiled sweets. Just pop a boiled sweet of your choice (just the one) into the post and it and all the other entries in front of Adam on the morning of April 23rd. The sender of the one he likes best will win *Superheroes* (we'll send the sweet wrapper back too).

- *Superheroes* is on disk. We have an alternative for tape users, though – US Gold's *Super Sim Pack*.

YOUR NAME

YOUR ADDRESS

.....

WHY YOU THINK YOUR SWEET SHOULD WIN

YOUR MACHINE (TAPE OR DISK)

- Send your entries to Stupid Sweetie Compo, *Amstrad Action*, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. Closing date Friday 17th April

The AMSTRAD ACTION Subs Club Newsletter...

issue 2

Welcome to the second edition of the *Amstrad Action* Subs Club newsletter. Remember, this newsletter is sent only to subscribers, so all the great unwashed out there who *don't* order their regular copy of AA won't get all the inside info and special competitions and offers that we'll be slipping in! And now for this month's gossip...

Adam has taken a bit of a back seat in Reaction this month. Instead we've given over an entire page to Maryanne's mail (we've got loads of people writing in to her saying how they think we're all mean to her – *bah!*), plus a page from a new AA contributor, Doctor Fegg.

Doctor Fegg really is a bit mad, but then so's Adam, so don't expect there to be too much difference...

AmScene is a bit different this month, too. I went up to the European Computer Trade Show just before Easter to find out what was goin' down in the world of gaming.

The answer is, 'rather a lot' – unfortunately, not on the Amstrad. As we've been reporting in the last few issues, the full-price software houses are pulling out of the CPC market, leaving only the budget houses to keep us going with games.

That said, Codemasters, Alternative and Hi Tec are all busy turning out new – and original – Amstrad releases. And on top of that, AA will continue to plonk full games on the covertape. We'll also carry on trying to get demos of forth-

coming releases.

The one good thing about the gradual decline in new games is that publishers are now more prepared to sell us the rights to put their games on our covertapes. Hurrah!

We've been staggered by the response to our plea for fanzines for our special fanzine 'theme' issue. There are loads of amateur (and not so amateur) publishers out there, and some of the mags we've seen were really rather good...

The main feature this month, though, concentrates on the sorts of fanzines you might want to produce. And it's by no means a straightforward business... you'll have enough trouble just breaking even, never mind making a profit. But the pleasure of producing your own magazine may well outweigh all of that.

By the way, fanzine, er, fans should note that this month's Buyers Guide covers the best DTP programs around, while the PD page rounds up all those



CPC fanzines out there... PLUS, next month you can look forward to Richard Fairhurst's excellent Powerpage DTP prog on next month's covertape! (It was too big to squeeze on this time.) Powerpage will only run from disk, but it will run on either a 464 or a 6128.

Andy Price's machine code column is drawing to the end of its coverage of machine code theory... it's soon going to be time to put it all into practice!

Andy will be designing a complete game, then taking us through all the various programming stages. At the end of the series we should have a complete game to put on the covertape, and you should have all the know-how you need to program your own games!

Oh dear, Action Test looks a bit thin this month, doesn't it? We were hoping



• We were hoping to bring you a full review of the latest Ocean licence *Addams Family* this issue. Instead, you'll just have to content yourselves with our glorious covertape demo, won't you? (The prog is 128K only.)

COVERTAPES: THE INSIDE STORY

The covertape is one of the most popular features of the magazine, and quite often the one we have most trouble with!

Finding the programs to go on it is only part of the problem. There are quite a few full games available to us (we have to pay to use them, of course), while every now and then we can get software houses to give us demos of their latest games.

Serious software is not so easy, though. "Why is that?" you ask. (Go on, then, ask) This is because (a) believe it or not, there really isn't a lot of decent, serious software about (although the authors will tell you otherwise), (b) if software is decent, the publishers/authors want to carry on distributing it them-

selves and (c) serious software is generally designed for the 6128.

This is the most serious problem. Over half of our readers have 464s. Any covetape software must, where possible, run on both a 64K and a 128K machine, and from both tape and disk...

We can't always manage this. Sorry. But the technical problems really are quite major sometimes. It's less of a problem for games, since they've usually been written for the 'lowest common denominator' (sorry, 464 owners). But 'serious' software can be a real headache...

But enough of all this generalising. To give you a proper picture, here's the tale of the June covetape, and the one or two little technical snags that cropped

up at the last minute. It's no more than we've come to expect...

Oh dear. Oh dear oh dear. Oh dear oh dear oh dear oh dear (oh, just get on with it – Adam)

The sprite definer and driver are a great pair of programs from reader Sean McManus. He even re-wrote one of them for us so that they would both work on the 464 and 6128. AND he made sure they would run from tape as well as disk (by putting them in the right order on the tape).

Until we got a call from Ablex, our duplicators, just as they were about to start duplicating. "It doesn't work from tape!", they said. We tried it too. It didn't. We couldn't understand it. We spoke to ace coder Dave Looker, who puts

together our covetape masters for us. He couldn't understand it. We spoke to Sean. He couldn't understand it. (That's a lie, actually – we couldn't get in touch with the bloke in time.)

Eventually Dave tracked the problem down. When you load from tape it uses a bit memory that isn't used when you load from disk. And that bit of memory held an RSX installed by the first sprite program that the second sprite program needed before it would work!

Well, it all got sorted out in the end. But this techie problem was typical of ones we get all the time. Which is why it's just as well we have Dave Looker around, since assembling the covetape master can often mean knowing just as much about the programs as the programmer!

to bring you *The Addams Family*, but it wasn't quite ready in time. We could have driven up to Ocean, played it for a couple of hours, taken a couple of shots and knocked together some kind of review, but that's not the way we do things. But next month we'll have *The Addams Family* for sure...!

However, what we did manage to do this month was round up all the latest releases from French softie Loriciel.

At the moment, Loriciel doesn't have any distribution arrangements in the UK. The idea is, though, that if we see any French games we think are really cool, that we'll fix up a special mail order deal so that AA readers will be able to get them...

Mind you, a lot of these French games are a bit... weird. The graphics are nearly always brilliant, but the gameplay can be a bit weedy. And the plots are a load of old nonsense half the time.

The best of the bunch by far, this month, was *Guardians*. It's an arcade puzzler that leaves your wrists aching and your pulse racing. It's a bit of a corker, basically, and we'll be seeing if we can rig up a deal for you readers shortly...

As part of our efforts to give you the best possible games coverage, we're incorporating budget game reviews into *Action Test* proper. Some of these budget games are really good, and they deserve more space than we could give them in the old budget section.

There still doesn't seem much point in giving re-releases big reviews, though. Quite often these are games that were out full-price only a year ago, and we've given them full reviews already. Re-releases will be confined to our new *Action Replay* section.

...And that's probably about all there is to report this issue! See you in a month's time...

Drop us a line!

We'll be printing letters from subscribers in this newsletter, so if you've got an opinion you want airing, send it to us. We can't guarantee to print every letter, but since this newsletter is for subscribers only, you stand a good chance of making your views known.

The address to write to is: AA Subs Club, Amstrad Action, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The best letter each month will win a prize (though we don't know what the prize will be yet).

Down the pub with Adam and Rod

ADAM PETERS brings us up to date on the latest board-level discussions at *Amstrad Action* HQ (the Pie & Pumpkin public house)

Scene: The saloon bar of The Pie & Pumpkin. Two gently steaming plates of... something... are being studied by two very worried-looking men. They are Adam and Rod (or Rod and Adam, depending on which door you've just come in)...

Rod: So, er, what do you reckon it is, then?

Adam: Well yours was steak and kidney pie, and mine was supposed to be vegetable lasagne.

Rod: So have we got the right ones?

Adam: Isn't that a bit of steak in yours?

Rod: It's a bit of cabbage, I think. Sure it's not your vegetable lasagne?

Adam: What, with gravy?

Rod: Maybe they burned the cheese sauce.

Adam: Yeah, but look, there's something moving there. You wouldn't get that in a vegetable lasagne.

Rod: You wouldn't get a plastic flip-flop in a vegetable lasagne, either, but there's one in yours.

Adam: Mmm... tasty. It's the only bit I can chew, too...

Rod: I think I'll just get a bag of crisps.

Rod goes back to the bar. Adam swallows the last of the flip-flop and idly pushes someone's glass eye around the plate while he waits.

Adam (when Rod sits down again):

What do you think of the May issue, then?

Rod: I think it's pretty good. The skull on the cover is brilliant. Maryanne didn't like it at all, especially when she found out it was a real one.

Adam: You shouldn't have locked her in that dark cupboard with it.

Rod: How was I to know I'd forget to let her out for the weekend?

Adam: All that banging on the door should have told you something.

Rod: Yeah, but she'd been doing that all day anyway.

Adam: But back to the issue, huh? The new, two-page *Line-Up* looks cool. And it's good the way we've got the *Action Pack* box leading you on to the next page. And that we've got three pages devoted to the tape.

Rod: Did you know that was one of the most common requests to come out of our reader survey? That people wanted more information and detail about the tape?

Adam: I did know, actually. I was the one who told you. You're forgetting lots of stuff these days, Rod.

Rod: Am I? I don't remember forgetting anything recently...

Adam: *Amscene* is pretty good, too. Especially that story about ACU being dead. How could they tell?

Rod: No, now come on, it's always sad when a magazine closes.

Adam: That's not what you said yesterday.

Rod: I wasn't writing the Subs Club newsletter yesterday.

Adam: Anyway, I'm still waiting for you to say nice things about Reaction...

Rod: It's OK.

Adam: What, not even a little bit funny?

Rod: Huh. Bit, I suppose. Here and there.

Adam: You're just jealous because you think you write all the funny bits.

Rod: No I'm not. Anyway, I will admit that *Grapevine* is looking better than ever, and the 'how a game is made' feature is brilliant. I still can't work out how you could have spent £695.95 on bus fares, though.

Adam: It was a double-decker.

Rod: Oh.

Adam: Anyway, I'm still fed up over the Readers Poll.

Rod: Why?

Adam: Because I got 'Idiot of the Year' and you got 'Cool Dude of the Year'.

Rod: Only to be expected, though.

Adam: Grrr...

Rod: By the way, you're in trouble with Hi Tec for only giving *Jetsons* 10%.

Adam: There is a reason for that. In fact, I'll let you into a little secret. No-one in the company who tried the game could get off Level 1. And we're talking professional games testers here. With five levels, people are going to be missing out on an awful lot...

Rod: Good point...

Adam: Hang on a mo.

Rod: What?

Adam: We're running out of space!

Rod: Oh no, you're right!

Adam: I'm going to have to talk really fast or I won't even finish this sen...

to be continued...

The winning sweet...

We had an AMAZING response to the sweetie compo in last month's newsletter. (Well, I was amazed. It was Adam's idea and I thought nobody would enter.)

We had some very interesting little comestibles plopping through the AA letter-box, including one which looked altogether too much like something that had plopped. We gave that one to Maryanne, saying it was a Fudge Pattie.

People were also pretty original when it came to saying why their sweet should win. For example, Mr. J. Maxwell said: "Because I bought it back from France and it's my last one." (That was the ploppy one, by the way.) Whereas Daniel Hurst said: "It was the only one without fluff on it." (It had plenty of fluff on it by the time we'd kicked it around the floor a bit.) Meanwhile, Lee Rouane reckoned his confec-

tion should win because it was: "Nice and sweet and full of nuts". Yeah, Lee, but *Amstrad Action* isn't (unless you count Maryanne.)

Overall winner (in the disk section), however, was Claire Harris, of Bury St. Edmunds, who thought she should win, "cos I'm a girlie and my sweet's in girlie colours!" And it was! We gave it to Maryanne to examine, and she said, "Aw, that's lovely. It's got a sort of cerise/torte diagonal motif with a delicate twist of ultramarine... and... and..." Yes. OK. Thank you Maryanne.

Winner in the tape category was Paul Wright, of Portishead. He thought his sweet should win because, "it lasts great". Hmm. Well, he's got to win because he was the only entrant with a 464. You'll have to do better next time, though, Paul!

The AMSTRAD ACTION Subs Club Newsletter...

issue 3

Welcome to issue 3 of the *Amstrad Action* Subs Club newsletter.

Available exclusively to subscribers, it contains all the latest AA news, views and gossip. *They said it couldn't last. "How can you maintain that standard of journalism month after month..." they began... "It's not easy," we said. "...and still expect people to read it?" they went on*

Full-price software releases are getting a bit like buses these days; you wait for ages, and then three turn up at once.

But what a trio they are! Although we knew a CPC version of *Lemmings* was being taken very seriously by Psygnosis, we still thought we'd 'believe it when we saw it'. After all, it's pretty unusual for a publisher to come back into a market it's previously abandoned. Particularly a 16-bit specialist like Psygnosis.

And yet here it is – probably the most talked-about game of 1991 (on the 16-bits) has finally made it on to the Amstrad.

But is it any good after all the hype? Well, you'll just have to read the review in the latest issue, won't you...?

With *Lemmings* being so eagerly-awaited, it's tended to push *The Addams Family* into the background a bit. This is a pity, because at first glance it looks really good. But why has

Ocean made it 128K-only? This is going to cut potential sales by at least 50% (our research shows that 50-60% of Amstrad owners have 64K machines). Ocean's argument is that you really need the extra memory to be able to produce a decent game licence, but we still can't help feeling that their decision is going to make at least half the Amstrad owners out there fed up.

And if Ocean is selling Amstrad games to only 50% of the Amstrad market, is it surprising that sales are disappointing? And disappointing sales lead – as we know – to publishers pulling the plug on the CPC. It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy, and it's very, very frustrating.

And what about the third full-price release reviewed this month, *Bonanza Bros*? We'd been waiting for this one so long we'd almost forgotten about it... just so long as US Gold doesn't forget about the Amstrad!

Indy 4 still looks on the cards from

our Brummie buddies, but after that... well, will US Gold be packing in the Amstrad too?

US Gold has similar problems to Ocean when programming Amstrad games. For the Goldies, though, the technical problems are worse. US Gold specialises in converting top arcade games to home computer format, and you have to remember that these arcade blasts are running on some seriously spiky kit! Even the Amiga struggles to emulate arcade hardware, so it's no surprise that what was a graphic treat in the arcades looks somewhat less than inspiring by the time it makes it to the CPC...

With all this in mind, it would be really nice to set the clock back about four years, to a time when programmers produced original games for the CPC. It makes a lot more sense to start off by taking into account the machinery's limitations and then designing a



game than it does to start off with the game spec and then somehow try to make it work.

Apart from that, arcade games are not always noted for playability. They're certainly not noted for taxing players' brains! Sadly, though, games are commissioned and published differently these days. Publishers start off by obtaining big-buck film or arcade licences, then converting them to every format possible in order to recoup the investment. It's very rare now for a publisher to release a game on a single format (except the Amiga), with the result that us Amstrad users (and other 8-bit owners too) have to live on a diet of inappropriate and over-ambitious games.

The budget market could be our salvation, though, surely? Well, possibly, but although budget games sell in huge

COVERS: THE INSIDE STORY

Think designing a cover for a magazine is easy? Think again! For the entire saga on how this month's cover was planned, designed and produced, read on...

First of all, we had to have the idea. We knew *Lemmings* was likely to be the biggest release of 1992, and that it would be ready very soon, so that was the obvious choice. It was just a pity that the other Amstrad mag had already featured *Lemmings* on their previous cover. Only one solution: we'd have to do it better!

We came up with the idea of having a single, terrified-looking lemming leaping from a cliff-top while all his mates looked on. We wanted him to look as if he was really leaping forward 'out' of the cover, so we planned to have his arms covering part of the magazine's logo.

We also wanted to include the month's two other big games – *The Addams Family* and *Bonanza Bros* on the cover. We hit on the idea of using Mobo for a speech bubble about missing cover tapes!

Now we had to find an illustrator who we thought could do a good job with our brief. We've used a talented chap called Mike Roberts several times before and he was our choice this time. We called him up, he came round and we told him what we wanted. We had to be very specific because the illustration had to leave room in the right places for the text – the 'coverlines'.

Seven days later we had the final illustration. We'd given Mike pictures of lemmings, Mobo and Gomez (from *The Addams Family*) to work from and he'd produced excellent caricatures. He'd also put everything where we wanted it – essential for the cover design.

What happens next? Well, once we have the artwork for the cover (some months it's a photograph), Angela, our art editor, sits down at her Macintosh and designs the cover. This means more than just slapping down the words where there's space! Typography is an art form – you have to choose the right font and type size/style for best effect. Just to make things even more complicated, you have to choose the right colour, too. This is another reason why a really tight commission is essential. If there are too many colours in the background, it can be next to impossible to find a colour for the text that will show up. People do need to be able to read the coverlines!

Then the cover has to go to a 'repro house'. The printers who produce the magazine make up pages from four separate 'films' (coloured cyan, magenta, yellow and black) and with a page as complex as a cover we have to

send it to another company to get them to produce these 'separations'

To cap it all, for various production reasons, our printers have to have the colour films one week before the final magazine deadline. When you add up all the steps involved in producing a cover on-time, you realise it's not as straightforward as it seems. It will take an artist at least one week to produce an illustration. The repro house may itself take a week to produce the separations. Include the fact that the printers need the separations a week early, and that the mag takes a week to print and another week to get into the shops and you begin to get the idea! The cover of that issue that's just appeared in the shops had to be planned and commissioned a massive 5 weeks earlier!

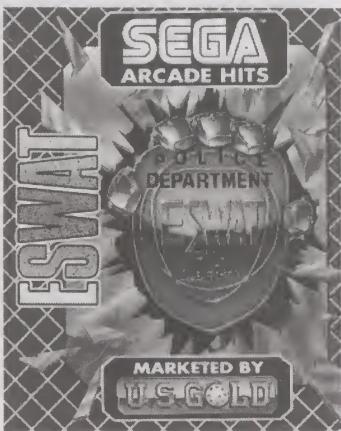
There's just one more problem. As well as all this, the cover's got to be topical...

numbers, the profit margin is very low. This means that there's never much cash available for those little luxuries – like programmers! There's little incentive for programmers to produce complex, deep and innovative games when they know they can never hope to earn more than a few hundred quid for their efforts.

That factor on its own is bad enough. Worse still, though, is the fact that programming is a skill that can be transferred to other formats. Keen CPC coders are being tempted away from the format altogether by the prospect of altogether bigger earnings from the 16-bit machines and – increasingly – the console market.

If it's any consolation, I predict that, just as the CPC is now in decline (nothing like the Spectrum market's recent collapse, though), The ST and Amiga aren't going to be too far behind.

The ST is already struggling in the games market, and the Amiga has – I predict – no more than another one or two 'boom' years left as people increasingly realise they can get better graphics and sound from consoles costing half as much...



• US Gold has always been a staunch supporter of the CPC. But most of its releases are ambitious conversions of arcade games... ESWAT was just one such conversion that didn't come off.

Drop us a line!

We'll be printing letters from subscribers in this newsletter, so if you've got an opinion you want airing, send it to us. We can't guarantee to print every letter, but since this newsletter is for subscribers only, you stand a good chance of making your views known.

The address to write to is: AA Subs Club, Amstrad Action, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The best letter each month will win a prize (though we don't know what the prize will be yet).

Down the pub with Adam and Rod

What did Adam and Rod *really* think of the last issue? Find out as we eavesdrop on their monthly meeting in the company's penthouse boardroom (the Pie & Pumpkin, actually)...

Scene: The saloon bar of the Pie and Pumpkin. It's completely empty, except for Bill the barman, who's polishing glasses. Bill is from the West Country, and our typist had trouble transcribing what he said... please bear with us.

Bill: Rod nadam? Oooer they then? What, they er too what comes in utter lunchtime an has summer my wife's food? Dow hospital ice pecked. Har har! So wodger want then? Praps icanelp? Oh, angon. Ear thayar. Wossitoobie gents?

Rod: I'll have a Perrier please.

Bill: Perrier, zit? Nothcher usual then?

Rod: No, I'm going to be healthy from now on.

Bill: Good-eye deer.

Adam: Rod, what's he talking about?

Rod: God knows. What do you want?

Adam: Lager shandy, please.

Bill: Onyx way. Any food today gents? Ears a menu.

Rod: Thanks. What's today's special?

Bill: Me wife's cook nit today. Alaska. [shouting] BRENDAN! WOSSA SPECIAL TODAY?

Brenda [from the back of the pub]: LOBSTER BISQUE, FOLLOWED BY DOVER SOLE MARINATED IN...

Bill: Soupan fish then, gents. Nye sishu, by the way.

Adam: Is that the type of soup it is?

Bill: Gordno, bless yer sir, No, I meant the lass tissue of your magazine. The wunnerbout running a fanzine. Reddit from start to finish I did. Thinkin of startin up meone moosic magazine.

Rod: So you found it helpful then?

Bill: Deaf nit-ly. You could almost say I found it indispensable.

Adam: Almost, but not quite.

Bill: And whatterabout that French software from lorry seals, then? Summer that looked interesting.

Rod: We liked Guardians.

Brill: Oh, I got one out the back.

Adam: A guardian?

Bill: Yeah, me wife says it keeps me outer mischief. I'm always pottering round it, pulling things out, putting things in. Scot a lawn, too.

Rod: You mean a garden?

Adam: Oh look, is that our soup?

Bill [turning]: Oh, ear is it?

Adam: Nye Sishu, I thought.

Bill: Euro tit!

Adam: Japanese, if anything.

Bill: No, I understood every word!

Rod [groaning]: Yes, but what about those survey results? Interesting, weren't they?

Bill: Strue. Üder Thor tit. Arthur Eders with four sick fours. And most of them ales!

Rod: Yes, well, thank you. Come on, Adam, let's sit down.

Adam and Rod take up their regular seats by the juke box with the Hawkwind greatest hits and the light bulb that doesn't work.

Adam: Going back to these French games, I've had this really brilliant idea. Why don't we take the ferry over to France next month and see how easy it is to buy CPC games over there?

Apparently you can buy them in these hypermarkets that they have in all the major towns.

Rod: That's not a bad idea. But is it really feasible to hop on a ferry, just to go and buy some software?

Adam: Well, it's a long trip, but it doesn't cost that much if you leave your car at Dover. Besides, it's a good day out – you wouldn't go over just to buy software.

Rod: OK, I'll look into that. In the mean-

time, I've got an idea for you. You know this fanzine series you're doing? Well it ties in rather nicely with the fact we're giving away Power Page on this issue's covertape. What about getting Richard Fairhurst to produce a series on using the program?

Adam: What, you mean get him to take up the series once I've covered the basics?

Rod: That's the ideal.

Adam: I'll give him a call...

Rod: Still on the subject of dtp, we've had a bit of criticism from those on high about the fact your feature dealt with fanzines as a whole, not just how to produce them on a CPC.

Adam: Yes, but I think people are interested in the broader picture! Sure, the CPC is a great tool for producing fanzines, but there's more to publishing than sitting down to a keyboard – the hardware and software isn't that smart. The CPC is a great machine for laying out pages, but unless you know something about fanzine production generally, you're going to be disappointed.

Rod: Well, shall we see what the readers think?

● Do you think Amstrad Action should only be about using your CPC directly? Do you think we shouldn't be publishing articles about fanzines in general? Do you think the article should have concentrated simply on how to lay out pages with the Amstrad and let other magazines give you all the broader information you need? We want to know what you think!

Win a copy of Space Crusade (disk)!

"Oh yes please," you're saying, "not 'al!' What do we have to do?"

Well we'll tell you.



This question is in two parts. You have to get both parts right to win the prize (first correct entry drawn out of the bag gets it)...

1. Who is this man? Is it: (a) Rod Lawton, (b) Adam Peters, (c) Maryanne Booth

2. What does Adam... er, the person you've selected, most resemble? (a) a mutated potato, (b) a deformed marrow, (c) a hideously disfigured turnip.

Answers on a postcard, please, to Anonymous Person Compo, Subs Club, Amstrad Action, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

Closing date July 31st. Good luck!

The AMSTRAD ACTION Subs Club Newsletter... issue 4

Doesn't time fly? It seems barely four weeks ago we were putting the finishing touches to last month's Subs Club Newsletter. (Er, it was – Adam) However, a lot has happened since then. For a start, AA has been to France and to Clacton, all in the same week. ROD LAWTON reviews the past month at AA Towers...

This trip to France was a bit of an expedition, to say the least.

The thing is, it all sounded such a good idea at the start. We knew that the French CPC market was really strong, and that you were supposed to be able to get hold of games really easily, but we would never be convinced until we went over there ourselves to check it out personally.

In principle, it was all quite simple. Both Calais and Boulogne have pretty good shops. And both are just a short hop from Dover. Where it all started to get a bit complicated was when we worked out how long it would take to get to Dover...

You see we'd decided that the 10:15 P&O crossing to Boulogne would be the best bet. Now you have to check in at the ferry terminal at least 30 minutes before the departure time. Which meant arriving at Dover no later than 9:45. Once we'd allowed time to find the car park, park the car and then make our way to the terminal, we realised we'd want to hit Dover no later than 9:30.

Now if you live about ten miles from Dover that's not a problem. When you live about 230 miles away, it's a bit different...

"How long will it take us to get to Dover from Bath?" Adam asked one of Future's circulation people.

"Better allow three hours," he said.

"How long will it take us to get to Dover from Bath?" Rod asked one of his relations.

"Better allow five hours," said Rod's relation.

We split the difference, and allowed four hours for the trip... which meant leaving Bath at 5:30am. This raised one very important question. What damned fool thought up this idea in the first place.

Rod managed to get up early because he's got a little sprog who likes to get up at about 4am. Adam got up early by not going to bed in the first place.

We arrived at Dover 15 minutes ahead of schedule. Not bad guesswork, eh? Checking in was no problem, and there's



a bus to take you from the terminal to the ferry when the time comes to board.

The crossing was fine. The sea was really calm, with no real waves (ulp), swell (groo) or rolling motion (barff...). We arrived at Boulogne spot on schedule.

Boulogne is actually a rather nice place. Apart from the fact that you can't trust the zebra crossings. There are loads of fancy shops in the town centre, while just up the road is a rather nice sandy beach. Four miles in the other direction is the Auchan hypermarket, the place we'd

come so far to see...

Well, I was disappointed. Sorry, but I was. Here I was, expecting some cross between the Lloyds of London building and the Pompidou Centre in Paris... and what we got was a glorified Asda. Not that there's anything wrong with Asda. That's where the AA team buys all its clothes... (shut up, you fool! – Adam).

The computer section made up for it all, though. Well over a hundred games, and nearly all of them available on disk, too! We did have a bit of trouble explaining to the bloke behind the counter that we were English journalists and wanted to take some pictures. We think he must have been foreign.

Once we'd done all our research, of course, we could relax until it was time to take the boat home. Let's see now, French time is one hour ahead of English time, so if the boat leaves at 18:15 English time then it must leave at 19:15 French time... which means that... wait a minute. The boat doesn't leave at 18:15 English time at all, does it? That's 18:15 local time. Which explains why we were able to wave goodbye to our boat from the quayside. Oh.

We caught the next ferry, though, and arrived back in Blighty at 9:00pm. Which means we arrived back in Bath at

GAME REVIEWS: INSIDE STORY

"You do what for a living? Blimey, you're on a cushy number, aren't you?"

Yep, tell people what your job is and that's the reaction you always get. They think you spend all day playing computer games – which sounds like an ideal existence for any amateur computer buff.

If only it was. You see there's a big difference between playing games for pleasure and reviewing them for a living. For a start, when you play games for pleasure you get to choose the ones you play! If you're doing it for a living, though, you have to review all the games that are released (it is actually possible to get into legal trouble if you don't – it's all to do with 'restraint of trade'). Which means that for ever great game you really enjoy playing, there are three or four which are a real pain in the neck.

That's not the worst of it. You can usually tell straight away if a game is good. For that matter, you can usually tell straight away if a game is bad, too. But if you propose to publish a review stating that a game is bad, you'd better be pretty

darned sure of your facts. Otherwise it's a trip down legal lane again...

For example, if you load up some really horrendous and extraordinarily difficult shoot-em-up with five levels, it's not enough to play just the first one and then slag the whole game off. How are you to know the remaining levels aren't tons better? You have to prove a game is a load of old rubbish before you can say it in print. And if that means sitting in front of this really dire game for hours on end until you finally crack it, then so be it.

There are other problems too. While it's very important to review new games as soon as possible, you can come a cropper. Most software houses are prepared to let magazines see pre-production versions of a game, just so that the magazines with the reviews in will be on the shelves at the same time as the game appears in the shops. It's a system that brings benefits for both the software houses and the magazines... as long as the game is a good one.

The problem with reviewing

pre-production games is that you can't slag them off! If you do, the software house can decide that it's not really finished after all. Meaning that you've got to scrap your review, maybe even that month's cover, and then find something else to go in its place.

The way round this is to give every pre-production game a good review, whether the game deserves it or not. That way, everyone's happy, right? Wrong. The software house is happy because it gets a good review, the magazine is happy because it doesn't get sued (and may get an exclusive), and the readers... ah yes, the readers. The readers get told this rather naff game is actually very good. So they rush out to buy it as soon as they can and get utterly peeved when they get it home.

This seems a bit cockeyed to us. After all, you're the ones buying the magazine. You want advice you can trust. Which is why we steer well clear of reviewing dodgy pre-production games just for the sake of an 'exclusive'. (Of course, an

exclusive is nice if there are no strings attached...)

Still fancy a job reviewing games?

Well then, assuming you don't mind playing games to death, whether you like them or not, there are the grabs to do too. What are 'grabs'? Well we can freeze the CPC screen at any time during a game, and save that screen via a Macintosh in a form which we can import directly into our DTP pages.

That bit is easy. What isn't so easy is getting far enough in the game to get the grabs we want, piecing together separate grabs in an art package to produce walkthroughs or maps and finding screens that show exactly what the game involves. Just doing the grabs alone can take several hours (and we have to share the machine with several other mags).

We could just play the game for half an hour and bang in a couple of screen shots and leave it at that. That would be the easy option... but we believe in reviewing a game properly.

1:00am, utterly knackered, burned to a crisp by the fierce mediterranean (nearly) sun and working out how we could do a feature on the CPC scene in the Bahamas.

As if a day trip to Boulogne wasn't enough, on the Wednesday of the same week I went to visit Peter Brunning in Clacton on Sea. He wanted to show me his new Brunword ROM, which can do some really astonishing things. Like check your typing as you type, up to a theoretical maximum speed of 400 words per minute! Not possible? I assure you it is!

This instant spell-checking is just part of Peter Brunning's new word processing arsenal. He's selling three different ROM packages at three different prices. The 464 ROM module is designed for 64K machines. Since it runs from ROM, though, it doesn't use any of the machine's own RAM! The *Infoscript* database which forms part of the normal Brunword package isn't available in this version, however.

Next one up is the 6128 ROM module. This does feature *Infoscript*, which runs in the second 64K of memory. Last on the list is the Elite ROM module. This features an 8-bit printer port and some very fancy printer controls which allow, amongst other things, a selection of different fonts.

Look out for a full feature review on these products next month!

Two other exciting products turned up this month: a new firmware manual and a new RS232 interface. Both are incredibly useful add-ons to your CPC system and both were feared extinct when Amstrad ceased production.

Well we can thank CPC fans Thomas Defoe and Simon Cobb respectively for this excellent news. The RS232 interfaced wasn't debugged in time for review this issue, but check out *Technical Forum* this month for a review of the new firmware manual.

Drop us a line!

We'll be printing letters from subscribers in this newsletter, so if you've got an opinion you want airing, send it to us. We can't guarantee to print every letter, but since this newsletter is for subscribers only, you stand a good chance of making your views known.

The address to write to is:
AA Subs Club, Amstrad Action,
Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth
Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.
The best letter each month will
win a prize (though we don't
know what it is Oyet).

On the boat with Adam and Rod

The ferry trip to Boulogne took an hour and three quarters each way. Plenty of time for our two heroes to reflect on the mysteries of the universe...

Adam and Rod are standing on the deck of the cross-channel ferry. Behind them, the deep, green-blue of the sea merges into the hazy azure of the morning sky. Ahead, the deep, green-blue of the sea merges into the hazy azure... they're in the middle of the English channel. Rod's leaning forward, peering into the distance. Adam's reading the lifeboat instructions stuck to a wall.

"Dum de dum de dum de dum..." hums Rod, "Fifteen men on a dead man's chest, yo ho ho and a bottle of rum." "Duty free shop open already then Rod?"

"No. Just getting in the spirit of things, that's all. Do you know, the last time I was on a cross-channel ferry, the sea was so rough the waves were breaking over the bow and water was streaming across the decks."

"Are you trying to frighten me?"

"Not at all. Anyway, the notices show where the lifejackets are."

"Do you think we'll need them then?"

"No. Shouldn't think so. Can you swim?"

"Why?"

"No reason. Just something the captain said, that's all."

"Why, what did the captain say?"

"Oh, nothing really, Adam. It was a few minutes ago anyway. Just something about abandoning the ship."

"WHAT?"

"Look, don't worry about it. Do you see anyone else panicking?"

"I don't see anyone else at all!"

"Oh. Wasn't just me who heard it then."

"Wait a minute. You're winding me up, aren't you?"

"Ha ha, just my little joke. You shouldn't get so nervous, Adam. Anyone would think you didn't feel comfortable on boats..."

"I do. Perfectly comfortable. Boats don't bother me at all. I don't even get seasick."

"No. Right."

"I mean, take this morning. I had muesli, toast and marmalade, scrambled eggs, the lot. I've got no problem keeping it down."

"Really? [groo...] Very interesting."

"That was nothing compared to the chap next to me, though. He had fried bacon and mushrooms and fried bread and fried tomatoes and a runny egg and..."

"Thank you. [grulphhh...] Very interesting, Adam."

"Mind you, I'm a vegetarian. I'm against eating animal flesh. Especially when it's not cooked very well. Do you remember, Rod, we stopped at that motorway services place along the way and that guy had..."

"Baaarrffff..."!

"Oh look Rod, you had the same for breakfast as he did."

Eight hours later, Adam and Rod are on the ferry home. The sun has

been shining all day. Rod's skin looks like a diseased tomato. Adam's wearing a pair of sunglasses that look like welders' goggles. In the end, Rod can't stand it any longer.

"Adam, have you seen yourself in those?"

"No."

"Oh."

"Why?"

"Cos they look stupid, that's why."

"They make you nervous, don't they? Because my eyeballs are hidden, no-one can see where I'm looking."

"Neither can you."

"That's true. Shall I drive back to Bath, by the way?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You can't drive."

"I knew there was a reason."

"Anyway, I promised the ad department I'd look after the car personally."

"That's a point, whose Skoda is it?"

"It's not a Skoda, it's a Volkswagen. Can't you tell the difference?"

"Not with these sunglasses on..."

"Hey, look, I can see the cliffs of Dover - we're nearly there."

[Adam takes his sunglasses off.]

"Rod, can you see something sticking out of the funnel of that ferry in the dock there, just next to the multi-storey car park?"

"What, the multi-storey car park we parked right at the top of? The one that didn't have much of a guardrail around the edge? You know, the place where I was saying the handbrake didn't seem to work properly..."

"Rod, there seem to be an awful lot of people waiting for us on the quay."

More competitions! (one, actually)

We've got a brilliant caption compo for you this month, and a chance to win a copy of *Terminator 2* on disk! Rod is standing in the middle of the Auchan supermarket in Boulogne looking very surprised about something. Now what do you imagine he's saying to Adam (he's behind the camera)?

Answers on a postcard please to:

WHAT'S HE SAYING? COMPO
SUBS CLUB
AMSTRAD ACTION
BEAUFORD COURT
30 MONMOUTH STREET
BATH
AVON BA1 2BW

● Closing date 31st August



The

AMSTRAD ACTION

Subs Club Newsletter...

Oh no, it's that time of the month again! No, not the Poll Tax demand but that wonderful moment when the crisp, brand new copy of Amstrad Action plops through the letterbox and on to the hall carpet. ROD LAWTON takes a look at another issue in the making...

Oh no, I still can't believe it. I wake up, sweating, in the night, thinking about it. My every waking hour is spent in mortal dread, my life an agony of dread and mortification.

Why? Haven't you guessed? Last month's Type-Ins section, of course. I mean, how could it have happened?

For those of you who hadn't noticed (what, don't you read the magazine?) last month's Type-Ins section bore more than a passing similarity to the month before's. Well, actually, it was completely flippin' identical...

What we can't understand is that we worked on the proper section (the one you're getting in this issue now) well in advance of the deadline. We tidied up the copy, laid it out, sent it off to our big printing machine in the basement (which produces the transparent films needed by the printers) and that was the end of it - as far as we were concerned.

Too blimmin' true it was the end of it! Due to some major and quite horrible muck-up, the previous month's films were

sent to the printers instead of that month's. We've racked our brains and can only come up with one explanation:

Pages are sent to the typesetting machine as files from our layout Mac. Sometimes these files don't print properly (they're very complex documents) and they have to be sent again. We can only assume that the wrong file was sent down when the first failed to print out correctly.

We knew there was a slight problem because we looked at the first set of films that came back. "They're fine," we said, "they can go off to the printers just as soon as they print out correctly." It was only a minor problem (a bit of the page missing) but the file still had to be sent down again. Yup. As it happens, the wrong file. It didn't occur to us to check the films again when we were told that the file had printed out fine... oh woe, oh woe, oh woe...

That wasn't the only calamity last month, though. Our tape-compiling genius Dave Looker phoned us up and told us

that Defenders of the Earth (last month's covetape game) was a multiload effort, and so wouldn't transfer to disk. He would have to send ABLEX, our duplicators, a disk master too, so that they would be able to produce a disk version that did work. "Fine, I said, I guess we'll just have to put up with that." What I didn't do was explain it to Adam - not before he'd already written the tape pages inside the mag. The tape inlay itself had been finished days before, so it was too late to do anything about that.

The result? Scores of angry readers complaining that they couldn't transfer Defenders of the Earth to disk. And that was on top of the scores of angry readers complaining that the Type-Ins were exactly the same as the month before's and... and... what?

This is it, you see - problems always come in threes. So what horrible, ghastly, unthinkable disaster was waiting in the wings? Maybe it had already happened and we didn't know about it?



This is why we're all nervous wrecks at the moment. There is just one consolation, though - it can only get better...

...Starting with this current issue! Several little projects we'd been working on matured at the same time to produce what we reckon is one of our best issues for ages.

For all technical types we've got a feast of serious stuff this month. OK, so Technical Forum is down (for one month only) to three pages, but there are no fewer than six extra pages of techie stuff.

This kicks off with the first hardware project we've featured for ages. We're not that keen on hardware projects as a rule, because the things are complicated to do and too many time-consuming and expensive errors can creep in. With this month's DIY lightpen project, though, we thought

PAGE LAYOUTS: THE INSIDE STORY

We're always banging on about dtp on the Amstrad... but we don't use CPCs for laying out the pages in Amstrad Action. Powerful though the CPC is, the 1200dpi resolution and infinitely-scalable dot-free typefaces we are a little beyond it!

Which is why we use a whole barrage of ultra-powerful Apple Macintosh machines to lay out our pages on-screen.

However, the basic principles are the same. The whole process works like this:

1. Somebody writes the words for a review or article. These are handed over to Rod.
2. Rod reads the copy, checking for spelling mistakes, bad grammar and so on, then imports it into a 'page grid'. Page grids in QuarkXPress (the dtp program we use) are complex things. Text can be displayed in any one of 30-40 different fonts, at any size. It can be compressed or extended horizontally, the characters made closer together/further apart, the leading (space between lines) can
3. Once the text is styled up (a pretty long job), our art editor, Lam, has to design the pages. This involves separating off headlines, strap-lines and boxouts. QuarkXPress handles text in boxes, which can be any size, shape and colour you want. They can be moved around the page at will, shrunk, expanded, rotated and more. Each box can have any number of columns, a border, special text indents - it's complicated stuff!
4. There are more than just words on the page of course. There will also be screen grabs, pictures of game packaging and photographs. All these are imported into the page so that it can be viewed exactly as it will appear in print. Screen shots are 'grabbed' by a special real-time video grabbing

be altered and load of different styles (such as bold, italics etc) can be applied. This typeface, incidentally, is News Gothic, set at 8pt with 11pt leading and 95% horizontal scale. And this is one of the simpler styles we use...

board fitted to one of our Macintoshes. Game packaging is scanned in via a flatbed scanner. Photographs are usually handled by our separate scanning department, which can produce extremely high quality results.

5. With all this on the page, it's time for Lam to do his stuff - arrange it all so that it looks good and it's easy to read. "I create art", says Lam, "I bring life and meaning to hollow words and pictures. I produce a unique vision of..." (put a sock in it, you damned fool - Ed)
6. Once a page is laid out it is sent to our typesetting machine via a network which encompasses some 150 Macintosh computers in five separate buildings. It's impossible to simply deliver a disk to be printed. A game review like Lemmings in the last issue but one could have a file size of several megabytes!
7. Even printing the page isn't simple. Our printers need positive 'films' (transparent sheets) to produce their

printing plates from. If it's a black and white page, there's just one film. If it's colour there are four. These have to be printed out with 'registration marks' so that they can be aligned exactly at the printers.

This is all very well, but there can be lots of problems along the way. Macintoshes are pernickety beasts and they crash quite often - sometimes they can corrupt files too. And because the operating system uses dozens of individual files saved on the machine, differences from one machine to another can prevent pages from printing properly.

Pages produced by QuarkXPress, too, often have fancy graphics which have been created using professional art programs. When the file is printed, special additional files must be present too. These files contain information needed for any additional graphics to print properly. There may be as many as a dozen such files for any one page.

The next time someone tells you dtp is easy, tell 'em to give us a call...

we couldn't go wrong. It's a brilliantly simple idea that's also cheap and quick to do. And at the end of it you've got a lightpen-driven art package! Admittedly, it's no Art Studio, but the feature includes an explanation of how the lightpen and the program work, so you should be able to adapt the principles to write your own lightpen programs...

Talking of writing (how's that for a link?), I took myself over to Clacton-on-sea for a long overdue visit to Brunning Software.

Peter Brunning, the brains behind the Brunword word processor, then went on to show me his latest development – he's produced a ROM version of the program which also includes an ultra-fast spellchecker, mail merge facilities, a relational database, ultimate print quality... but why read about it here? Check out the feature review on the mag.

The third in our tri of techie specials this month is our feature on colour printing, written by new recruit Richard Fairhurst (he's also taken over from Adam Waring as AA's resident technical expert). People have been asking us about printing in colour for ages, so we decided to produce the definitive guide.

Anything else to report about this issue? Well there's the small matter of our four-page Virtual Reality special in the centre of the mag.

Virtual Reality is this year's buzzphrase. Virtual Reality cabinets are appearing in the arcades, and the movie industry's first VR film – *The Lawnmower Man* – has been getting loads of media attention. We take a look at what Virtual Reality actually is, plus some of the spookier implications of computer-generated 'alternative' worlds which may soon be indistinguishable from the real one...

More than that, though, we also take a look at what the phrase 'virtual reality' means. And is it really all that new, or have computer games been offering virtual reality for years?

Drop us a line!

We'll be printing letters from subscribers in this newsletter, so if you've got an opinion you want airing, send it to us. We can't guarantee to print every letter, but since this newsletter is for subscribers only, you stand a good chance of making your views known.

The address to write to is: AA Subs Club, Amstrad Action, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The best letter each month will win a prize (though we don't know what it is Oyey).

A That's Life special: The AA Affair...

It's a fair cop. Within three days of the last issue hitting the streets, Esther was on the dog and bone, inviting us down to Wood Lane for a severe savaging on the box...

Esther: [Waiting for applause to die down] Thank you! No... [still waiting] thank, you, really... [signals men in audience to remove electrodes – clapping stops] Thank you very much. Now, this evening we have a rather serious report for you. We have been inundated with calls from readers of a certain computer magazine. Now that computer magazine is called 'Amstrad Action'. Nothing unusual in that, you may think. But this particular magazine has fixed to its cover a compact cassette tape containing computer software. Now, not everyone chooses use this cassette tape directly. Some readers have machines which load software from diskettes. So what do these people do? According to the manufacturers, they can transfer the software from the cassette on to a diskette. In fact, that is exactly what they say here [holds up last month's covertape to camera]. Can you see that? Looks harmless enough, doesn't it? Well this tape contains – the magazine claims it contains – a 'video game'. And that 'video game' is called 'Defenders of the Hearth'. Nothing unusual about that, you may think. But if you look a little closer... [close-up of large, red fingernail scraping on plastic case] you'll see this claim:

"All programs transfer to disk"
[Audience stirs with discontent.]

Now claims like these are not unusual. [Esther puts down the covertape]. But we decided to put it to the test. We asked top computing expert Dominik Diamond to follow the instructions on the cassette tape *inlay*, as it's called. What did you find, Dominik?

DD: Well, Esther, I was looking forward to this as I wanted to give my joystick a good waggle, but even when I read the instructions lots of times, I still couldn't get the CPC switched on. The trouble is, Esther, *Defenders* is a multi-load game, which means you have to load it lots of times to get it to work.

Esther: So the game will not trans-

fer to diskette, despite the publisher's claim?

DD: Absolutely right. The CPC I used didn't even have a disk drive!

Esther: Damning evidence indeed. Now, to put his side of the case, we have in the studio tonight Mr. Ron Norton, editor of Amstrad Fraction... Mr. Lanton, as editor of this magazine, you must have known that these lies were being printed?

Rod: Actually, I wrote them.

Esther: Nevertheless, Mr. Longton, you must have known. Do you deny it?

Rod: No, Esther, I wrote them.

Esther: Well I think the facts will prove you wrong, Mr. Longthorpe. We have in the studio tonight another computer expert, Mr. Alan Peters, who has made a study of this magazine and its contents. Mr. Peters... or may I call you 'Alec'... would you please tell the audience what your job is?

Adam: I work on Amstrad Action magazine [audience stirs with anticipation].

Esther: And that, I think we will all agree, makes you ideally placed to judge the accuracy of these claims. Now I take it you have read this magazine, 'Hamster Action'.

Adam: Yes.

Esther: And, in your opinion, are these claims untrue?

Adam: Er, most of the time, no. [the audience mutter audibly]

Esther: So what you are saying is that there have been occasions that you personally know of where these claims have not been met.

Adam: Yes.

Esther: And just one such occasion was last month, when the magazine published a computer video game by the name of 'Descenders of the Month'.

Adam: Yes, but it wasn't 'Descenders of the Month'. [audience gasps]

Esther: So, not only did the video game not transfer to tape as promised, it was not even the game described? What do you say to that, Mr. Loganberry?

Rod: No. Or rather yes.

Esther: Mr. Legofeatures, you seem confused about exactly what you have said in your magazine.

Rod: Of course I'm not...

Esther: The fact is, Mr. Lanternplanet, that you have consistently lied to your readers about just how many of these... these... [peers at autocue] council workers did agree to fumigate their own wheelbarrows. For example, there was Mr. Albert Hedgepacket of Potters Barr who lost his entire savings because of the collapse of your company. And there are dozens of other people in the same situation. However... [listens to earpiece and smiles] Mr. Horace Pontefract of Wakefield thinks he has it beaten! [Reaches beneath table] This is his cucumber! Mr. Pontefract, how big, exactly, is your cucumber?

Rod: Pardon?

Esther: Come now, Mr. Pontefract, it's already been confirmed for the Guinness Book of Records.

Adam: [Improvising] Thirty-eight inches, Esther. [hisses to Rod] Shut up! I think we've got away with it...

Esther: Well I think we'll all agree it's the biggest one we've ever had on the show. And congratulations to you both [riotous applause – Rod and Adam sit back, smiling]. But now for something a little more serious. Tonight we have a special report about tie-pins, and how they ruined the life of one little girl in Huddersfield [Audience goes quiet]. Adam pops a lemon sherbet in his mouth. Rod goes to pour himself a glass of water.] The tie pins in question appear in this magazine – Hamster Action... [Adam chokes, Rod drops the carafe...]

Win a joystick!

NOTHING could be easier than this. If you want to win a rather decent Cheetah Tortoise (well, it's a sort of joystick, really) all you have to do is write to:

I WANT A PLASTIC TORTOISE, AMSTRAD ACTION SUBS CLUB, BEAUFORD COURT, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, AVON BA1 2BW

The first letter out of the bag on 30th September gets the tortoise!

The AMSTRAD ACTION Subs Club Newsletter...

issue 6 Oh no, it's that time of the month again! No, not the Poll Tax demand but that wonderful moment when the crisp, brand new copy of *Amstrad Action* plops through the letterbox and on to the hall carpet. ROD LAWTON takes a look at another issue in the making...

It's Amstrad Action's seventh birthday this month! Can it really be that old? I've edited the magazine for three of those years, and the time has simply flown by. It really is a testament to the soundness and durability of the machine that it's still going strong after all this time...

...In fact... hang on... I can tell you right now what our new ABC circulation figures are, because I've just had a memo drop on my desk... hold on a minute while I read it... good heavens, 35,159!

Now that figure is amazing for two reasons. Firstly, although it's down on the previous six months' number, it's down by less than 5% – and this is during the 'quiet' half of the year! (Traditionally, computer magazines always sell better in the July-December period than the January-June period.) Really, it makes more sense to compare this latest figure with the same period last year – and now we find circulation has actually gone up! Now this is the second amazing thing. Here we are, surrounded by pundits predicting the final

demise of the CPC, and yet AA is selling more copies than last year!

It just goes to show that the so-called 'experts' really don't know what they're talking about and that the CPC has as strong a user base as ever – and that's what counts.

Did you know that Future Publishing is launching a music magazine? It's to be called *Future Music* and it'll be aimed at everyone who uses their computer to produce music.

Don't get too excited just yet, though, because there won't be any CPC coverage! This is despite the fact that once you've fitted a MIDI interface, your CPC is the equal of any other computer for music-making (almost).

So why won't it be in *Future Music*? Well, there is the fact, admittedly, that few pop stars use CPCs on-stage (er, actually I don't know of any), while quite a few use Atari STs, not to mention the Apple Mac and the Commodore Amiga.

The basic problem is credibility.

People simply don't believe that an eight-year-old, 8-bit machine can still be useful.

This is nonsense, of course. Just because computer technology is advancing, it doesn't mean that 'old' computers become obsolete. There are many tasks handled by computers that come nowhere near stretching their abilities – and never will.

Take word-processing, for example. Admittedly, the more powerful your machine, the faster you can format and scroll through text, but diminishing returns set in very quickly. When it comes to simply typing in text, the CPC spends most of its time waiting for you, not the other way round.

Back to music, though, and this month's main feature. We've put together a guide to making music on your CPC which concentrates on 'professional' MIDI equipment but also looks at the products you can get that require neither heavy investment nor profound technical knowledge (or playing ability).

Like we keep saying, the CPC can do



just about anything. Now all we've got to do is convince the industry...

I've also rewritten the subscriptions pages this month. Not very exciting, you might think – after all, for regular readers it's just one of those regular sections you stop 'seeing' after a while.

That's bad news, as our new publisher, Colin Campbell pointed out. "Sell the magazine, Rod, not just the subscriptions," he said wisely. So I sat down and came up with a list of all the things we squeeze into our issues – and I was quite surprised by it all!

The thing is – and I know it sounds like we're blowing our own trumpet – we do try to make the magazine the most informative, authoritative and good-value read we possibly can. It's a process of continual improvement, though, rather than

FLATPLANS: THE INSIDE STORY

Just a minute, what exactly is a flat-plan? Well, it's a plan of the magazine which we use to work out which features go on what page. It's basically a sheet of paper with 60 boxes arranged on it, one for each page.

But surely it's dead easy planning an issue of a magazine? Just plonk down features and reviews where you like and send it off to the printers, no?

No! Things are a little bit more complicated than that, because of the way printers work.

You see they don't just print one page at a time, they print several at once in the form of a 'web'. These have to be planned in such a way that the folding/cutting machines arrange the pages in the right order in the magazine (it's all automated, you see). Two such webs (the top and bottom web) go to make a 'section'.

Sections can be of 16, 24 or 32 pages (due to the way the printing presses and webs work). *Amstrad Action* is put together using one 32-page section, one 24-page section and a 'cover

section' of 4 pages (which is done differently – and it has to be ready for printing a week earlier).

Now *Amstrad Action* is 'saddle-stitched' – bound by staples in the middle. What this means in practice is that the two main sections don't simply follow on from each other. One section (the 24-page section) is on the 'outside' of the magazine and the other (the 32-page section) is on the 'inside'. Section 1 includes the first 12 pages in the mag and the last 12, while Section 2 accounts for the 32 in the middle.

Getting complicated, isn't it? Well, that's not as complicated as it's going to get! If *Amstrad Action* was all-colour (if only!), things would still be quite easy – but it's not. Around one-third of the magazine is in black-and-white, and this makes things very complicated when planning the webs.

Basically, what it comes down to is this: because of the way webs are printed, there are only two or three ways

of arranging colour/mono pages. For example, in this issue of the magazine, because the first four pages of section 1 are colour, the last four must be colour too – and the centre eight are also colour.

And in the middle 32-page section, we're limited to a four-colour – eight mono – eight colour – eight mono – four colour layout.

This makes planning what features go where altogether more difficult. Especially when you consider that for a main feature we need several colour pages in a row, that sections like *Technical Forum* and *Type-Ins* need several mono pages in a row, and that some things – like *Line-Up* and big game reviews – need a colour spread.

On top of all that, there are the adverts. I know we all wish there weren't any, and that the magazine had a hundred pages and so on and so on, but adverts are a commercial fact of life and we have to accommodate them.

What we also have to accommodate is the fact that advertisers often insist on prime positions. This frequently means something as specific as wanting "a colour page facing editorial matter in the first half of the magazine".

This is what makes planning the magazine such a time-consuming business. The final straw is that the ads are being booked as the issue is being put together. Which means that things quite often change right at the last minute. By the end of the issue, we're lucky if we're only on our third version of the flatplan!

So if you ever wonder if all we do all day is play games, the answer is an emphatic "NO!" (It's also a thick ear if you're in the same room.)

Organising the flatplan is not the biggest job on the magazine, but it's still a time-consuming juggling act. It's just one more reason why producing a single issue of *Amstrad Action* is like completing a successful military campaign!

great leaps and, as a result, we sometimes forget how far we've come.

OK, that's enough flag-waving. We've also dropped a few clangers in our time. We won't go into the Type-Ins business again, or the problems with stuff transferring to the covertape... but basically, I reckon that occasional mistakes are the price you pay for continually trying to improve. There are two choices, as I see it. Either:

- (a) you produce a boring, reliable magazine with no mistakes that hardly anybody wants to read, or
- (b) you pull out all the stops to produce the best mag possible and accept that, occasionally, despite all your best efforts, things might go wrong

Quite frankly, option (a) would be a hell of a lot easier, but somehow I don't think our readers would settle for that. We certainly wouldn't.

Incidentally, I hope it hasn't escaped your notice that it's Amstrad Action's seventh birthday this month. (Huh! – we haven't had any cards, though.)

We haven't gone in for any major celebrations this year, though. Have you ever noticed how, as folk get older, they publicise their birthdays less and less?

Now I'm not suggesting that the AA team in any way feels old, of course... (Rod Lawton is 92)

Finally, don't forget the Future Entertainment Show, taking place at Earls Court 1 and 2 between the 5th and 8th of November this autumn. It promises to be the biggest even for games fans for years.

And somewhere amongst the 100,000+ visitors now expected at the show will be the Amstrad Action team. Be there or be square!

Mr. Anonymous revealed!

At last, the truth can be told. The mysterious marrow... er, man in the AA82 Subs Club competition was, of course, Adam Peters. Interestingly, most people thought he looked like a hideously disfigured marrow, but nearly as many felt he resembled a mutated potato. However, only one reader thought he looked like a deformed marrow...

Anyway, the winner of the compo is... [rustle of envelope]... Steven Knox of Sandback. Well done Steven, your prize (a copy of Space Crusade) is on its way!

Amstrad Action - the story so far...

DID YOU KNOW that *Amstrad Action* was the magazine that launched the Future Publishing empire, an empire which now consists of three separate divisions producing no fewer than twenty different magazines? Ten of these make up the now giant Leisure Division. Here's how it all came about...

OCTOBER 1985

Amstrad Action is launched to tumultuous acclaim (well, amongst Amstrad owners, anyway). Back then it was aimed at CPC owners (hurrah!), PCW owners (yawn!) and PC owners (never heard of it) too. That didn't stop it being a runaway success, though!

OCTOBER 1986

AA produces two spin-off magazines: *PC Plus* and *8000 Plus* (now *PCW Plus*). Good – got rid of the boring geeks at last. AA's circulation not remotely affected. These two magazines now form part of Future's Business Division, aimed at professional PC/business users. It's all about as interesting as it sounds, but we're sure they try jolly hard anyway.

SEPTEMBER 1987

Future launches a multi-format games magazine – *ACE* (Advanced Computer Entertainment). It doesn't compete head on with the down-market comics from the competitors, though, but aims at more mature, thinking gamesplayers. And it's successful enough to hit a circulation of over 50,000 and net Future whole heaps of cash when rivals EMAP make us an offer for the title we can't refuse in May 1989. (They subsequently made a pig's ear of it and had to close it down a few months ago.)

JUNE 1988

ST/Amiga Format was launched sort of off the back of *ACE*. It was perfectly obvious back then that the 16-bit ST and Amiga machines were heading for the big-time, so it made sense to provide a separate magazine for 16-bit owners. *Stigma* (in-house nickname) was also the first mag to sport a disk on the front...

JULY 1989

ST/Amiga Format did rather well. So well, in fact, that by issue 13 it was decided the time was right to split the magazine into two new ones – *ST Format* and *Amiga Format*. *ST Format* has gone from strength to strength

since then, and now boasts a circulation of 69,509. Incidentally, the mag's house nickname is *Stiffie*...)

JULY 1989

Well, what can you say? The magazine that now outsells *Q! Amiga Format* is the publishing phenomenon of the '90s. It now has an absolutely absurd circulation figure of 161,256. Which means that there are a hell of a lot of Amiga owners out there, and *Amiga Format* is one hell of a magazine.

SEPTEMBER 1989

In 1989, the Sega Master System had been knocking around for a few years but had never achieved much in the UK. The machines were cheap, but the games weren't – and they were little better than the offerings you could get for 8-bit computers. But, with its ear as ever to the ground, Future publishing knew what was coming and launched *S* magazine specifically for Sega owners. This later mutated into *Sega Power*, and was poised to exploit the exploding console market of the early '90s. To the extent that it now sells over 75,000 copies a month!

APRIL 1990

Wait a minute. With Future Publishing becoming the major player in computer magazines, why did they publish only one 8-bit magazine? That was soon put right with the purchase of *Your Sinclair* from xxx. In Future's hands the magazine has come to dominate the Speccy market. The Spectrum is a revolting little machine, of course, but we must accept the world is stuck with it.

OCTOBER 1990

The third magazine in Future's 8-bit line-up was a Commodore 64-specific title – *Commodore Format*. "Much too late," they all said, "the 8-bit market is dead!" Cobblers (sorry). Two years on, all the Future 8-bit titles are going strong, and *Commodore Format* has an ABC of 60,045. This means that, in total, 100,000 people buy an 8-bit Future magazine every month. Doesn't

sound like a dead market to me...

MAY 1991

The Amiga market is doing so well that Future decides there's space for a magazine devoted solely to Amiga users. That magazine is *Amiga Shopper*, and it wasn't so much a space as a gulf. *Amiga Shopper* now reaches 45,209 people.

MAY 1991

At the same time as the *Amiga Shopper* launch comes *Amiga Power*. This is a magazine devoted entirely to Amiga games players, and it now sells to 60,184 of them. These figures are at the same time, don't forget, as *Amiga Format*'s selling stupidly large numbers itself.

OCTOBER 1991

"There's going to be a revolution in PC gamesplaying," said all the experts. Future agreed, launching *PC Format* magazine. Never mind all these boring, techie business uses... the PC also makes a rather good games machine. And *PC Format* is proving the fact with a circulation of over 55,000.

JANUARY 1992

Sega aren't the only console players in town. Nintendo has always done just as well in the UK, and with the console boom under way, the next obvious Future move as a Nintendo mag. But could it be done? After all, Nintendo were notoriously crotchety about anyone using their name anywhere. Well it could be done, and so successfully that *Total!* magazine is selling over 80,000 copies within six months of its launch!

And thus, dear reader, ends the chronicling of Future Publishing's Leisure Division to date. The amazing thing for me, as editor of *Amstrad Action*, is that the magazine which started it all is still going strong!

"Live long and prosper," says Spock, doing that funny two-fingered gesture of his that looks ever-so-slightly-insulting.

He must have been talking about *Amstrad Action*.

● Future Publishing also produces *PCW Plus*, *PC Plus*, *PC Answers*, *Classic CD*, *MBUK*, *Cycling Plus*, *Needlecraft*, *Crochet Collection*, *Photo Plus* and *Today's Vegetarian*.

The Amstrad Action

issue 7 Subs Club Newsletter...

Here we are with another Subs Club newsletter. Remember, it's exclusive to subscribers! And talking of which, the ed has a whole sackload of mail to answer...

Save me from the BEANO!

I arrived back from holiday to find September's AA amongst the pile of bills. 'Great,' I thought, 'a way of keeping the children happy and busy for the last week before school.'

They had been persuaded earlier this year to swap a weekly Dandy and Beano for a joint subscription to your publication.

Imagine my horror when I found that yet again the covertape would not transfer completely to disk. The only tape recorder in the house which works with the computer is my radio/cassette so I am condemned to use it for hours at a time while they try out the games to see if it is worth sending off for the disk.

To save my sanity (and their pocket money), would it be possible for subscribers to opt for disk-only

versions of the cover programs? This could increase the number of subscribers as it would be unavailable through newsagents and it would stop the children from returning to Desperate Dan and Korky the Cat at the end of the year.

P.S. If this is not possible, how about a new cassette radio for me?

Kathryn Pearce

Peterborough

Hmm... the covertape wouldn't transfer to disk completely? If you are talking about the Defenders of the Earth covertape, that's because it's a multiload game. Otherwise, it may be because you're not using a tape recorder with a REM (remote) socket.

To work reliably, the disk transfer routine needs to be able to switch off the cassette motor while it saves files on to disk. If you don't have a REM connection, obviously it can't do that!

The only way to get round it is to stand by your cassette player, and switch off the motor manually as soon as you see your disk light flashing. When it stops, restart the cassette player.

Yes, we really are looking into the idea of a disk-based Subs offer. Unfortunately, our Subs manager is having to stand in for another member of staff at the moment, and has her hands full. More news if and when we get somewhere, though.

Finally, no, you can't have a new cassette radio...

Feeling under par

I have been trying to buy Jack Nicklaus Golf for over a year now without any success. Amstrad Action gave it big wraps in an issue just over a year ago, and being a golf fanatic I began searching.

After contacting all your mail order advertisers and trying locally to order a copy I had given up. Until AA81 arrived and I saw it at no. 2 in your

top ten sports sims. I've got the bug again.

I get the same answer from all sources - it is no longer produced. Have you any ideas on how I can obtain it? I did try your small ads (free) but my plea was not printed. How about putting it on a future covertape?

By the way, my local computer shop manager agrees it's the best golf sim, but he's got an Amiga or something.

Don't let them send me to the funny farm!

R.P. Morrill

Hull

Yes indeed, Jack Nicklaus is an excellent golf game, and we sympathise with your inability to get hold of a copy. As for your 'small ad' we suspect you mean 'helpline entry'. We print as many of these as we can, but there's not always room.

However, if anyone reading this can help Mr. Morrill get hold of a copy of this game, get in touch with us! (Write to the AA Subs Club.)

It would be an excellent game to get for the covertape, but there are two problems. Finding out who owns the copyright for discontinued games can be next to impossible. Secondly, Jack Nicklaus is a big game, and a multiload on tape. Both make it unlikely material for the covertape. Sorry.

Ultimate Disk Solution?

This is a general letter on the subject of computing to let me air a few views. I am one of your older readers and first off would like to thank you for keeping up the standard of Amstrad Action. I first bought it in issue 56, when I was contemplating getting a computer for my five-year-old son. All the High Street shops were pushing Amigas and Atairs, and although I am jealous of their graphics and sound, it was Amstrad Action's



unbiased writing which persuaded me to buy a 6128. Now it's on every day for at least three hours and (touch wood) is going strong.

Thinking back to those old days, I was more concerned with getting educational software, but there were a lot of good games out then - what happened to them?

Try to get Laser Squad or Purple Saturn Day now and no-one has heard of them. Try to get Turrican 2 on disk and it is no longer stocked. If the CPC is in decline, why cannot software companies re-issue the best of the best? I would like Laser Squad - AA rave about it - but it can't be got. Why?

On the subject of tapes and disks, we all know Amstrad booted by taking out the tape facility on the 6128 Plus, but if you want it this can be amended by WACCI. If disk games are not being purchased, presumably because they are not wanted or are too expensive, where does this leave disk owners without a tape facility? I also wonder how many people have 6128 Plus machines - not many, I bet.

If single-load games can be transferred to disk using a tape-disk facility, why do the software people not include such a facility at the start of tape games? Similar to the menu option supplied by AA on the covertape? That way disk owners with 6128s get the best of both worlds and 6128 Plus owners would be encouraged to have their machines modified. The need for blank 3-inch disks would continue and software companies would not have to go the apparent hassle of producing games on disk. Even games which required 128k could be done this way - look at The Addams Family, really good graphics on an 8-bit machine. ■■■

Write on!

If you've got something you want to say to me, the ed, or to the rest of Amstrad Action's subscribers, the address is:

SUBS CLUB
AMSTRAD ACTION
BEAUFORD COURT
30 MONMOUTH
STREET
BATH
AVON BA1 2BW

Remember, the Subs Club consists of dedicated CPC owners. Maybe you've got a problem finding a program or product, or perhaps you've got a tip to share with the rest of us? Whatever the reason, we'll be glad to hear from you!

Heinously bogus dudes

You have been asking for letters from subscribers for the new newsletter, so here you are. I want to talk about those heinously bogus dudes with Commodore 64s getting all the best games on their format.

As an example, the C64 version of *The Addams Family* is identical in gameplay and sonics/graphics (comparing the CF and AA) reviews but only takes up 64k of memory - Way!

The C64 has all the BIG games like the superb *Speedball*, *Robocod* and *Chuck Rock*. It's probably because the C64 is outstandingly better than the Amstrad - NOT!!!

Any additional cost I'm sure would be minimal and the resultant purchases to get speedy loading would make it cost-effective.

It could be done with multiload games where the main file loads/transfers to disk and the tape is only used to access levels!

P.S. It would surprise you how many of us oldies are into computers. In any office, bring up the subject of computer/console games and work stops for an hour. I don't know why, but women just aren't interested. Must be something in the genes. Although they seem to like puzzles like *Pipemania*, *Tetris* and *Boulderdash...*

Norman Stewart
Stonehaven

I'm glad you like the magazine, Norman, and I agree with you that it's crazy not to be able to get games like *Laser Squad* and *Turrican 2* any more.

However, I can give you one little titbit of gossip. It looks like *Laser Squad* is going to appear as a budget game sometime in the next few months... we'll keep you posted!

Meanwhile, as far as your suggestion about tape-disk transfer on commercial games is concerned, it makes perfect sense... except for one thing. Piracy.

You see if you can make one copy of a game on disk, you can make another... and another... and another...

Software houses would have to resign themselves to losing huge numbers of sales to disk owners, simply because many of them would be tempted by pirate copies. It's a case of a criminal minority spoiling things for the rest of us.

The Balrog must be eating the handle of his whip in jealousy because THEY have got *Elvira Mistress of the Dark* and WE haven't!

Please can you help me out with this totally un-triumphant situation and talk to all those programmer type dudes the Bitmap Brothers and the dudes and babes at Genias. Keep up the good work with the outstandingly excellent new look. It is, to use a Manchester term, 'SORTED'.

P.S. If you have any problems understanding the words in this letter, ask that truly triumphant dude Adam Peters.

Women and computers? Hmm... you're right. Generally, they're not at all interested in game, except the puzzle-style games you described. You know I think I feel a special feature coming on...

A Wide boy

You're offering a prize for the best letter, eh?

Well, it may not be the best, but 'w' gets my vote for being the biggest. I agree it doesn't have a true descender, not on my Star LC10, anyway, but it is very wide and your pen has to change direction a lot to do it properly. Not like 't', for instance.

Well, that's it. Can I have a years subscription to AA now please?

Brian Watson
Ely

Yes, of course. Just send in the payment and we'll treat you like any other reader (even though you don't deserve it after such a stupid letter).

Slanging match

I would just like to make a few points on no particular subject, but vaguely linked with AA.

Firstly, the thing I am finding most annoying at the moment is the way that the new (and 'totally bogus') magazine CPC Attack has been slagging AA off.

Originally, I bought CPC Attack as a supplement to my regular Amstrad Action, just to see what it was like, but now I think the situation is getting out of hand. For example, in issue 2 of Attack, the editor criticises AA twice in the same half page! Now I don't know whether he thinks he's being clever by doing this, but I

Paul 'Mulgig' Mulherin
Manchester

Sure, C64 owners have got some fancy games that we haven't, but when was the last time anyone used a C64 for word processing, or art, or DTP? And have you ever tried loading software from a C64 disk drive? It's one of the fastest drives in the world - NOT!

Yeah, we could speak to the programmers, but by and large they're bogus dudes chasing a quick buck instead of supporting the best 8-bit there is. Heinous!

admire your attitude towards the issue. The "I'm not going to get down to their level" ideal is very mature and I hope other AA readers agree with me. Anyway, good luck seeing off this usurper!

Point number two: what's happened to all the decent programs on the covertape over the last few months? You started off well but now type-ins aren't working, games aren't loading and there are too many serious 6128 applications.

Where is all the useful 464 software? Surely there must be some good stuff out there somewhere? Also, can you please put a menu on BOTH sides of the tape? It's a real bind having to load the menu on Side One and then turning over and loading on Side Two.

In AA82, you put Elite at the top of the sims list, and as it is over five years old, surely it can't be that difficult to get this classic game on the front of the mag? PLEASE ROD! I absolutely loved that game on my old (don't laugh) Acorn Electron.

Last but not least, why oh why are you wasting space in AA with that prat Doctor Bertram X Fegg, when the space could be put to much better use, such as a proper BASIC tutorial on writing games?

Overall, though, AA is a great read, well balanced in all departments and well worth £2.50 a month.

Mark Roberts
Sheerness

Lots of people have written in to us to complain about the slaggings we get in CPC Attack. We're a pretty thick-skinned bunch here, though, and we don't really take exception to it - unless it's factually misleading. I think they're being a bit silly, though, because most readers are more interested in computers than slanging matches between magazines. And given that a lot of their readers will already be buying Amstrad Action, it's a bit dumb to insulting their readers' purchases.

Decent programs on the covertape, eh? You know I think the covertape programs are getting much better, not worse, although everyone has their own opinion. If type-ins aren't working and games aren't loading, let us know which ones and we'll try to sort it out. It may be a simple technical problem or you may have a faulty tape.

We really do try hard to get in decent, serious, 464 programs. The plain fact of the matter is, though, that nearly all 'serious' users have 6128s - they're not interested in writing software for the 64k machine.

As far as Elite is concerned, yes it can be that difficult to get it for the covertape. First of all we have to find out who owns the copyright these days, then we have to agree a fee for using it, then we have to get hold of a copy and then we have to overcome any technical problems involved in getting it on a tape of fixed and limited length. I will look into it, though.

Finally, Doctor Bertram X Fegg has departed to that great magazine in the sky. Stunning wit and raconteur he may have been, but he was universally disliked. RIP Bertram X Fegg.

We have a winner...

...for our "What's He Saying?" compo in the AA83 Subs Club newsletter. I have to say, though, that I thought all your answers were a bit poor (© Vic Reeves 1991). I want to see a higher standard next time, mind!

Anyway, the prize (a disk copy of *Terminator 2*) goes to Brian Watson of Ely. Not because his offering was especially witty, but because I liked his postcard, which was very French... here it is, as a matter of fact.



The Amstrad Action

issue 8 Subs Club Newsletter...

Christmas is already only just round the corner. In AMSTRAD ACTION, though, Christmas comes earlier still, in the form of this month's free cover-mounted tape head cleaner! And now, on with the gossip...

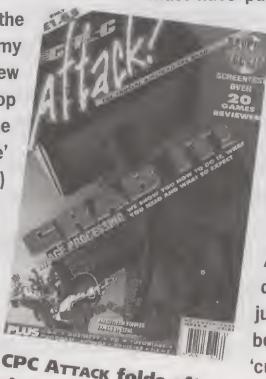
CPC ATTACK goes down

Just six months after its launch, Amstrad Action's latest rival, CPC Attack, has been closed. This was the magazine born out of the ashes of ACU, closed when the 'official Amstrad mag' licence ran out.

CPC Attack was a radical change from the ACU formula, featuring the 'streetwise' Amy character on its cover and in its game review pages. Poor old Attack did manage to drop some wonderful clangers, even from issue one. Such as giving Lemmings a 'bogus game' award. And a letter reply in the sixth (last) issue described the prospect of a 60-page issue (a little dig at AA there) as being 'unthinkable'. That issue of CPC Attack consisted of 60 pages...

Why was it closed? The magazine's editor, Pat Kelly, moved to another company and it seems that Attack's publishers decided that there wasn't enough money in the Amstrad market to continue publishing the title. Strange, since an anonymous advertising person at their offices told one of our people on the 'phone that they were selling "115,000 copies".

Such nonsense aside, Attack was actually improving



CPC ATTACK folds after six issues.

with each issue. And although the natural thing would be for us to gloat about the magazine's demise, it really isn't like that. For a start, we sympathise with the staff, who must have put a lot of hard work into the title. Not only that, it's bad news for the Amstrad market generally.

So what does the news mean for AA? Well, to be honest, I don't expect it to make much difference. We've always attempted to cover the entire spectrum of CPC use, and I can't honestly say that anything CPC Attack did (or didn't do) made any difference to what went into Amstrad Action. Will it mean more readers for AA? I doubt it, because we got the impression that just about everyone who bought CPC Attack bought AA too. I think Attack was more of a 'curiosity buy' than anything else.

Will we ever see another Amstrad magazine? I doubt it. Not because Amstrad

Action is unbeatable (although it has seen off every other Amstrad magazine ever published), but because no other publisher has any confidence in the market. We have.

Write on!

If you've got something you want to say to me, the ed, or to the rest of Amstrad Action's subscribers, the address is:

SUBS CLUB
AMSTRAD ACTION
BEAUFORD COURT
30 MONMOUTH
STREET
BATH
AVON BA1 2BW

Remember, the Subs Club consists of dedicated CPC owners. Maybe you've got a problem finding a program or product, or perhaps you've got a tip to share with the rest of us? Whatever the reason, we'll be glad to hear from you!

'Alternative' software

Have you entered the huge Alternative competition in this month's mag? Why not? There are well over 100 games to be won - enough to keep you playing into retirement!

Admittedly, not all of these Alternative releases are exactly Mastergame material... which brings us to a little mystery. "Count Duckula 2 is coming out soon," Alternative told us. "Good," we said, "we can't wait." But we did wait. And wait...

And lo and behold, Count Duckula 2 was released into the shops and we still didn't get a review copy. Why not?

Because lots of software houses won't send magazines copies of games which they know are going to get bad reviews! Are you surprised? We were surprised

when it happened to us.

However, we did get hold of a copy of Count Duckula 2 the other day. We loaded it up with bated breath, wanting to know what we'd missed. Then we found out.

Count Duckula 2 is bad. It is very bad. Imagine sprites that move slower than a Skoda being pushed up a hill. Imagine graphics that would have been prehistoric when dinosaurs walked the earth. Imagine gameplay more puerile than TV am (sorry, that is going a bit far, isn't it)...



COUNT DUCKULA 2: not so much a duck as a dog. Dear oh dear...

for review! Just remember folks, buy nothing until Amstrad Action has reviewed it!



Video revolution

We all know the Amstrad is the best 8-bit computer you can get, but it does have its limitations. The main one is that it's sold as a package. Great - you get everything you need in the box. Yes, but the power supply for the computer is in the monitor... which means that you can't run the computer without it.

Sure, but you can't use a computer without a monitor, can you? You can if it has a TV modulator. Like the Spectrum, for example, or the Atari ST. Or the latest Amigas. The monitor costs as much as the machine itself, and if you can run your computer through a TV instead you can save yourself a whole heap of cash. Just think - a 6128 on its own might have cost only £200 or so. The machine could have swept the world!

Amstrad, however, in their wisdom chose to flog the machine at twice the price to about a tenth as many people as it might have sold to...

Anyway, what I'm coming round to is this. If you bought a mono CPC because you either couldn't afford a colour version or intended to use only serious applications (the mono displays have much better displays for word processing etc), you're a bit stuck if you want to play games. You can't just go out and buy a colour monitor because they're not sold separately!

Your only real alternative is to sell the machine and buy a new one - which is ridiculous, to say the least.

HOWEVER, Amstrad did at one time offer a solution: TV modulators. These contained the necessary electronic gubbins to turn the CPC's output into a TV signal and incorporated a power supply to feed the keyboard. These did cost a whopping £100+, though, and they haven't been available for some time.

Back to square one, then.

...Until, that is, those very ➤

innovative people at Campursoft decided to do something about it. (Campursoft is the company that brought us the excellent MicroDesign Plus, reviewed recently in the mag.) They are now putting the finishing touches to a video lead for the CPC, one the plugs into the back of your machine at one end and into the SCART socket of a domestic video recorder at the other. (Just about every VCR on the market has a SCART socket.)

Why should you want to do this? Well, we'll assume you're not vain enough to want to record your games-playing exploits to show to your friends... no, the point is that this effectively means you can use your TV as a monitor. You can bypass the VCR altogether if your TV has a SCART socket (many newer models have).

Campursoft are also working on a CPC power supply. Without this, you would still have to use your mono monitor as a power supply, even though you were viewing the picture through your telly.

All this is fine, then, for owners of mono systems, but is it news for colour CPC owners? Well, it is really because it's much more fun playing games via a 26-inch TV screen than using your CPC's measly 14-inch monitor?

Mind you, if you've only got a 14-inch portable TV, I guess I wouldn't bother...

Mansell demo coming up

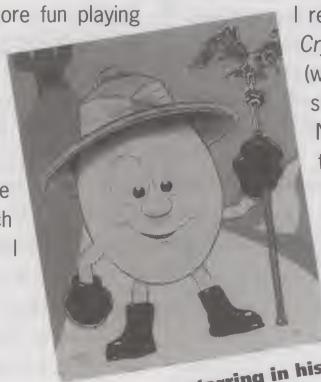
Well, old Nige has sewn up the Formula One drivers championship already. Which has made the rest of the F1 season a bit dull, really. But Mansell's success this year will have done Gremlin's forthcoming Nigel Mansell game no end of good. We're expecting the

Amstrad version to turn up around Christmas time, but we are at the moment doing our best to get hold of a demo of the game for our cover-tape. We couldn't quite manage it in time for this month, but it looks a cert for the January issue. What a Christmas present!

So what's the game going to be like, then? Well Gremlin haven't been hugely forthcoming about it. The best description we've been able to get out of them is that it's like Super Monaco Grand Prix only better. Not unlike Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge, either.

Sounds pretty good to us! I guess we'll have to wait until the demo arrives to be sure, though. But with Mansell chucking in his F1 career at the end of this season, I doubt there'll be a sequel. Much to the disgust of F1 fans, it looks like he's heading off to America to compete in Indy car racing (Indianapolis and all that) which is distinctly mickey-mouse stuff compared to Formula One. We suspect the money's better, though...

Dizzy with success



I really can't believe it. Crystal Kingdom Dizzy (which we expect some time in November) will be the twelfth Dizzy game!

It seems that the Oliver twins (the programmers of the original Dizzy) met with some scepticism when they took

the idea to Codemasters

head honchos the Darling brothers (there are lots of brothers in this affair - very confusing). You can understand it, really.

Nevertheless, Dizzy became a best-seller. So much so that Codemasters owe much of their considerable turnover to the little fellow!

From the archives...

Here's something I thought would be a bit of fun; what exactly was Amstrad Action saying seven years ago, in issue one? It must have been a very different world then - after all, the CPC6128 had just been launched...

"The initial response of the software houses to the new machine has varied from the enthusiastic to the lukewarm. One company went so far as to express downright annoyance at the axing

of the 664, a sentiment doubtless shared by many owners of that machine. Most software houses, though, are adopting a cautious approach. They're interested by the extra memory, but don't want to sacrifice compatibility with the 464.

"Melbourne House's Paula Byrne summed up the general feeling when she said of the 6128, "At the moment we have no plans. We'll see how it sells..." Gremlin's Ian Stewart was

Public spirit

We're getting loads of letters from readers all saying the same thing: "we want more PD reviews". Which is one reason, incidentally, why we've increased the PD section in the mag from one to two pages.

The fact is that the serious Amstrad market is changing considerably. Most major publishers have long since abandoned the machine, but at the same time ordinary programmers have been really getting to grips with the hardware. To such an extent that CPC users are starting to turn out applications and utilities of commercial quality for the public domain.

But why, if they're that good, are they appearing in the public domain? Two reasons: firstly, there are few publishers out there now prepared to take on serious releases. Secondly, CPC owners are a pretty public-spirited (no pun

intended) bunch whose greatest reward is simply the satisfaction of helping other people out.

When we first started running a public domain section in Amstrad Action, the software available was limited largely to CP/M stuff. Now, though, the PD world has taken on a life of its own. PD libraries are springing up everywhere, and the bulk of the stuff being produced is Amstrdos-based.

It's also getting very good. Which means that many people are turning to the public domain for the serious software rather than the remaining 'serious' publishers.

That's bad news for these publishers, of course, but good news for the users. Far from dying out, the 'serious' Amstrad market is booming. And given the growth and interest in the public domain, it looks like continuing!

Tortoise winner!

Remember the competition to win a Cheetah Tortoise joystick in the AA84 Subs Club newsletter? Well we have a winner. He's Edward Blackshaw of the Bedford Milk Appreciation Society, and he has this to say about vegetables:

"Can you imagine the pain and suffering of a jacket potato as it is slowly roasted alive in a hot oven, or a beetroot, as it is tortuously boiled over decomposing hydrocarbons? This is totally insane, and has got to stop. Moreover, imagine the terror experienced by a lettuce leaf as it is ripped apart and chewed. Can you not now see the barbarism involved in vegetarianism? At least meat is dead when it is eaten. Spare a thought, however, for the vegetable that is swallowed whole, and still alive. Imagine its torture as it is slowly dissolved in strong acid, then alkalis. Imagine its long, drawn-out death, not lasting a few seconds, but many painful minutes. It would be against the law to subject any animal to this torture, so next time you are eating a meal, spare a thought for the poor, suffering vegetables that are experiencing their last minutes, and maybe you could slip a few of those carrot-sticks under your knife, and to possible freedom?"

Yes, well, thanks for that, Edward. Clearly a poor, suffering vegetable himself. Edward, your plastic tortoise is on its way... (slowly)



more optimistic: "It opens a new field," he said, "it should stimulate far better games - not necessarily bigger, but certainly better."

Well, it looks a whole lot different with hindsight, doesn't it! Over 40% of CPC owners now have 6128s, and just about all 'serious' software uses the extra memory. Meanwhile, the 664 is barely remembered and never mourned...

The Amstrad Action

issue 9 Subs Club Newsletter...



Want to hear some news, hot off the press? I'm leaving Amstrad Action! (Oi, who was that cheering?)

It's true – after over three years in the editor's chair, it's time for me to move on. Future Publishing is launching its own range of books, and I'm to be the 'Book Editor'. It's a complete change of direction for me, and offers plenty of opportunities.

But what about Amstrad Action? Well, I think the magazine can get along quite well without me. Thinking back to the first editorial comment I ever wrote (in AA50 – good grief, was it really all that long ago?), I said that ultimately, Amstrad Action belonged to the readers. I still think

So what's Santa brought YOU this year (apart from a final reminder about the gas bill and a Poll Tax demand)? It's brought the ed, ROD LAWTON, a new job. Here, we'll let him explain...

that's true. I think in this business that editors come and editors go, but a really successful magazine has a life of its own. And a magazine becomes successful when it gives the readers what they want, not when it fulfils some



Still the best home micro there is?

publisher's 'idea' of what it should be.

Obviously I'm looking forward to my move – it is a promotion, after all – but I'm still a little sad about leaving

Amstrad Action behind. OK, so the Amstrad is 'only' an 8-bit machine, and the market is in decline. But the CPC is still, as far as I'm concerned, the best home computer to be released on to the market. The technology has moved on, of course, and the 16-bit machines can do things that the CPC can't. But as a computer for enthusiast and beginners alike, a machine that teaches you about every aspect of computing, the CPC rules.

So would I buy one today? Well... no I wouldn't. Not because of the machine's comparative lack of power, though. But because the industry no longer supports the machine. Games are harder to get now, and the best serious software was written years ago. If the support that existed in the mid-eighties still existed, the machine would be as good a buy as ever.

Write on!

If you've got something you'd like to say to us, then this column is the place to do it. So write in, we'll publish your letter.

SATURDAY ACTIONS
AMSTRAD CPC
COMPUTING
EDUCATION
ENTERTAINMENT
EXCITING
FUN
INTERVIEW
JOHN'S COMPUTER
LETTERS
NEWS
REVIEWS
ROD'S COLUMN
TECHNOLOGY
TOP TIPS
WEBSITE

For example, how about...
Can computers of today catch up with CPC owners?
What are you good at?
Predicting the future of personal computer technology.
Do you know anyone who's got a lot of old CPC games? What are they worth?
What's the best game you've ever had on a CPC? What's the worst?
What's the best game you've ever had on a CPC? What's the worst?

The perfect computer?

Just in case you feel way behind in the technology race just because you've got a CPC, here's a few facts – the way I see them – about its rivals:

Atari ST

You thought the CPC Plus had compatibility problems? The ST (and later the STE) have had more TOS (the name of the machine's operating system) changes than I've had hot dinners (well, nearly as many). The ST is in decline too – by my reckoning it's only a couple of years behind the CPC, and on a steeper curve...

Commodore Amiga

Well now, here's a machine that just keeps going from strength to strength... or does it? Sales are going up every year, but the undercurrents in the trade (I keep my ear pretty close to the ground) are that the major software houses are starting – only starting, mind – to ditch the Amiga in favour of more lucrative console game development. The Amiga is on the crest of a wave. But for how long?

Commodore 64

The C64 has always sold well. Better, in fact, than even Commodore had expected. Software houses continue to support it quite well. But once the games dry up, what then? What else can you use a C64 for? The range of serious software available

for it is pretty pitiful and anyway, there's a limit to what you can do with a disk drive only fractionally faster than the machine's tape loader!

Sinclair Spectrum

What can you say about the Speccy? Dreadful graphics, an awful keyboard and in its time the most popular computer on the face of the earth. The Spectrum is the closest relation to the Amstrad, so I feel quite kindly towards the machine. However, it's not much good for serious applications, and once the games dry up, what use will it be?

Sega Master System/Mega Drive

Ah, now then, consoles are the way forward, right? Hmm... but until Sega produce a keyboard, all you're ever going to be able to do is play games on them. OK, so that's all that many people want to do – it's still a bit limiting. You also have to get used to forking out £30-40 per game. Ouch.

Nintendo NES/Super NES

Much the same comments apply to these two machines as for the Sega counterparts. Fine for (rich) games players, but what about other computer users? Forget it. And while the 8-bit NES is

temptingly cheap at around £80 this Christmas, don't forget that games start at £30, and that the graphics are straight out of the Dark Ages. The Super NES (the most hyped machine in history) offers spectacular graphics. So long as you don't mind paying an unbelievable £50 per game.

PC compatibles

Many people are predicting a boom in PC ownership, especially amongst games players. True, PCs are getting cheaper all the time, but to buy anything capable of running decent games at a decent speed you still have to spend towards £1,000. And PC software isn't cheap. Games are typically £40, and serious programs anywhere from £70 to £700!

Amstrad CPC

So where does all this leave the CPC? As far as the industry as a whole is concerned, at the bottom of the heap. But knowing what we know about all the failings of its competitors (see above), if a committee of experts sat down to design a 'machine for the masses', a bit like a computing Volkswagen, how would it look? For a start, it would have to be cheap, which means 8-bit technology. It would need to be easy for beginners – built-in BASIC would be terrific. Software would have to be cheaper and you'd want to offer a machine that was ready to go straight out of the box – so you'd include a monitor. Sounds familiar? Of course it does... you own one.

Subs Club Mailbag...

Well now, we're running out of space for this issue, but I think I can still squeeze in some letters sent in by AA subscribers...

Rude to women?

As a long-time subscriber to Amstrad Action (since issue sixteen), I object to the recent sarcasm about women and computers. I had hoped that these chauvinistic remarks had come to an end, but it would appear that you can't resist adding fuel to the fire. Yes, I do own a copy of Puzznic and have a few adventure games, but most of the time my computer is used for very serious purposes.

I run a business so use both word processing and accounts software. Masterfile, Advanced Art Studio and Advanced Music System are all in frequent use. Stop Press, which is far superior to PowerPage, is used to produce a 16pp A5 monthly newsletter. All these programs have been mastered by careful study of the manuals.

I am no genius, have never been to university and left school at fifteen, but I can write programs in BASIC and have a working knowledge of machine code.

You do not receive more letters from women simply because most of us like to solve our own problems instead of writing to magazines at the first hurdle. Most of the answers to the letters you receive could be found by a little patient study of the manual!

I have in the past found your magazine very helpful, especially the reviews on hardware and serious programs, but, unlike many of your current readers, I feel the standard of Amstrad Action has dropped considerably during the past twelve months. You appear to think we are all about seven years of age!

If you can stop being rude to women and start writing in a mature manner I might renew my subscription.

Jo Maynard
Bristol

Oh dear. Well, we've obviously said something in the magazine to upset you (though you don't say what). We don't set out to be offensive to women, Jo, so if we have been we're sorry about it. We try to tackle things in an informative but also lighthearted way, so it's possible some of our attempts at 'wit' fail. We hope people don't take us seriously enough to be upset.

Your remarks about studying manuals brought a wry smile to my face. I have to admit that I've thought the same thing myself when answering readers' calls or reading their letters. A lot of people do genuinely come up against a brick wall when trying to understand their computers, but many more don't seem to have the patience to go through a set of instructions properly, or just experiment a little. How do they think we found out what WE know?

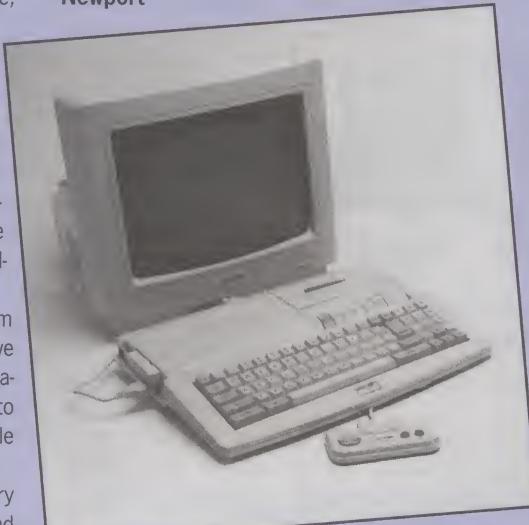
As for your complaint that we seem to think all our readers are seven years old – of course we don't! It's just that Amstrad Action is read and – we hope – enjoyed by people of all ages.

We do have many younger readers below the age of ten (whose principal interest is playing games), and many older, more serious readers like yourself. We try to cater for both.

Plus problems

My young daughter Joanne purchased a game tape during the school holiday recently called Short Circuit for her Amstrad 464 Plus. Unfortunately, it would not load. As I think it is for the early model, can you help solve the problem or let me have if possible the telephone number of 'The Hit Squad' so I can contact them.

Andy Powell
Newport



The new 464 Plus is a great improvement, but some older games won't load on it...

Well, Andy, it's bad news, I'm afraid. The problem is – as you've guessed – that Short Circuit is designed to run on the 'old' CPC and won't run on the newer Plus. You COULD call the Hit Squad, but I don't know how much good it would do you – they're certainly not going to reprogram a game just to work on the Plus. However, they might take pity on Joanne's plight, and offer to swap the game for one that DOES work on the Plus... try giving them a call. The number is 061 832 6633. Tell them that Amstrad Action sent you and we're looking forward to hearing how you got on.

Down and out?

I have been a keen AA reader since issue 19, when I was converted from your then rival, Amtix, after their future was in jeopardy. However, I have never quite felt the need to write in to air my views until now.

There's no point in denying it, the CPC market is in a total decline. Gone are the good old days when there were at least twenty game reviews in every issue and when you could go to any High Street W H Smiths and find at least two shelves crammed with games for the CPC. Nowadays, we're lucky if we get five new game reviews or find two decent games at our local Smiths.

I've had a CPC464 for over five years now

and I don't intend to change, either. It has served me proudly over the years and I even wrote this letter on the old DMP 2000! But the day when the CPC will be axed is drawing ever closer as CDs, Mega Drives and Super Nintendos take over. As sad as it may seem, it has to be expected as the CPC has had its boom, while the Mega Drives etc are just reaching theirs. I, however, shall stick with my old CPC right through to the end, as I'm sure many other faithful owners will. No Mega Drive will ever replace my CPC!

On a brighter note, I would like to thank AA for maintaining their excellent standards throughout the five years I have been with them. I see there's no slacking off in that department!

Tomasz Sztuka
London

Good grief, Tomasz, I feel as if you've written our obituary! While it's undeniable that the CPC market is in decline, I don't think the picture's quite as black as you paint it.

It's true that it's growing harder to buy CPC games in the High Street, but there are many areas of CPC activity that are thriving. For example, although full-price CPC software has largely dried up, budget software houses like Codemasters and Alternative are still going strong. (Codemasters now reckon they sell more games than any other software house – INCLUDING full-pricers).

As you say, every machine has its boom. Except that some 'booms' are longer than others. True, the CPC is having to give way to newer machines like the Mega Drive and Super NES, but I like to think that there will be CPCs still soldiering on in corners of the country long after the latest crop of consoles have been forgotten... gosh, it's enough to make you go all misty-eyed, isn't it?

Thanks, by the way, for your kind words about Amstrad Action. We're always getting it in the neck from people who think our standards are slipping. (Well, if they ever do, we can rely on our readers to bring us back on course!) It's always nice to hear from someone who thinks we're doing a good job – we certainly try!

Incidentally, I would point out that Amstrad Action's circulation, give or take a thousand or so, is as high as it's ever been. The financial structure of the magazine is such that we rely more on our readers than our advertisers for revenue. So as long as people want it, Amstrad Action will continue to exist!

Goodbye Rod, hello Linda...

Next month this newsletter will be brought to you by the new editor of Amstrad Action – none other than Linda Barker. Linda has been editing AA's sister magazine Your Sinclair for some time, and from next month she'll be in charge of Amstrad Action too. Linda knows the 8-bit market inside out – you're in good hands!

Greetings Readers!

A
M
S
T
R
A
M
ACTION

As you've probably noticed, there was no Subs Club newsletter last month. But we have a scapegoat! It was the fault of that lazy skiver Rod! However, we're back, in all our former glory, to provide you with an inside, insane, and innovative look at the world of Amstrad Action, Future Publishing and the private life of a loaf of bread.

So, this is the Subs Club eh? By the way, I'm Simon Forrester and I'm the new staff writer on AA. I'm also your host on this month's Subs' letter. Hello and welcome!

Musical Editors

Okay, so Rod wandered off to pastures new (and the second floor) to edit books. Linda takes over. However, all of a sudden, she announces that she's off to edit Amiga Power (congratulations, incidentally)! This still leaves the position open. At the time of writing, we've not got any definite names for you to write in to with all your outraged comments, but rest assured we'll have a new editor by the time we start work on the next issue (which, by the time you read this, will have been two weeks ago).

More Of The Same...



The lovely Linda

Incidentally, we want to assure you, the readers, that even though the staff is changing quicker than something that changes rather fast, AA will always provide the same quality blend of serious stuff, technical help, action games, letters, news and gossip that it always has. We just thought we'd mention it. Any new editor will be rigorously checked to make sure that their sense of humour is absolutely abysmal, in short, Lawtonesque. We'll also make sure that the new editor is not in the least bit photogenic, in keeping with the trend since the dawn of time. (Oil! Ed)

All Action

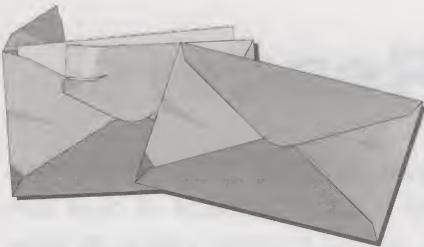
Now, I've been told by those in the know that these Subs Club newsletters are based around what's gone on in the past month. Well, it most definitely hasn't been quiet...

First up, there's the huge amount of software we've been sent for review. There was so much, that Linda couldn't fit it all in the mag this month. The amid flood was from Alternative, who provided us with the Classic Arcadia Collection, Air Attack Collection, The Popeye Collection, The Postie Pat Hit Collection, and Kids Pack 2. The Hit Squad obliged us with two budget re-releases, Terminator 2, and RBI 2 Baseball. Towards the end of the month (sadly, too late to be included in this issue) the Playdays pack arrived from Alternative.



Ten Excellent Reasons Why You Shouldn't Associate With Non-Subscribers

- They obviously don't trust us to provide the same quality magazine each month.
- They're so cheap they just go into W H Smith and read it there.
- They smell.
- They probably wear anoraks.
- Or those red trainers.
- Or white socks.
- They don't know what it's like to be bored silly by a dribbling ranting staff writer.
- They have to cope with ancient shopkeepers who still use the phrase 'New Pence'.
- They're never up to date with what's in the mag
- We don't. (Well, not unless Linda tells us to, very forcefully.)



Postbag Special

First off, Drehdriss. Barry Dare (*What a dashing name. Ed*) writes from Cardiff to inform us that when he loads it, the tape just continues to the end, and clicks stop. Well Barry, we rather suspect that *Drehdriss* works on disk, where it looks for the high score table as a separate file called 'DDHS'. Try pressing ESCAPE and see what happens. You might get lucky.

Next up is Adam Uytman of Pitlochry (where?) and Albert Coles from Middlesex, who both agree with Kathryn Pearce about putting disks on the cover for subscribers. Well, there is one problem connected with this idea. The extra cost would be phenomenal as, even though 3" disks have dropped greatly in price of late, they're still no where near as cheap as tapes. Oh well... you can still get them on disk by sending £2 along to the address that you'll find on the covertape pages.

Now, I'd like to hear a big "Aaaaaaaaah!" all across the country for Andrew Stevenson of Edinburgh, who's got a bust CPC. Even though he can't load anything (poor devil) he's still going to buy AA for all the other lovely stuff it's packed with. Now, considering our new initiative on what we're going to put on these tapes, I'd like to hear a big "Hahahehahehaho!" all across the country, as he's going to be missing out on

some of the best of the commercial software around at the moment. Seriously though Andrew, or can I call you Andy?, check the peg thingies that turn the tape aren't jammed, and then, if you feel brave, open up the case (invalid guarantees blah blah...) and check the connectors from the main circuit boards to the tape deck are still properly connected. If this still doesn't work, then either pack a few of your most hardy clothes and retire to the Amazon Basin, or take your CPC along to a repair blokey, who'll be glad to help you out (and take your money).

Oh no! It's more PD library complaints! This time from DL Wilkins. This one does seem a little more rational than most though. He, I assume he's a he, suggests that PD libraries should charge more for a better service, and, when featured in AA, should be rated as to an average reply rate. I personally think that's a good idea. I'll tell Tim. As for the general (or rather total) lack of speed of some libraries, it can be justified in some way, because no-one really realizes just how popular these things are. I've seen Richard Fairhurst's work room,

and it's piled knee deep with orders, and I'm not joking. Another thing, and I draw reference to a librarian who shall remain anonymous here, is that "You hardly feel like going all out to fill someone's order when they've just spent over twenty minutes screaming abuse at you over the telephone". Nuff said.

Covertape Bonanza!

Now... We get a lot of letters here from people requesting stuff for the covetape. PD stuff is easy, but when people request multi-million pound titles six months old, it gets really difficult. However, we're about to start *really* stretching the limits! The amount of new serious software we're putting together is phenomenal. From next month, there will be working versions of some of the best utilities available for your CPC. We're not giving anything more away just yet, but wait and see - you're going to be amazed. Unfortunately, we're going to have to increase the price by about 25p to cope with all the extra software, but quite frankly, if you're going to complain at full word processors, etc, for 25p, then you're beyond help.

A notepad!

Okay let's dispense with the pleasantries. This paragraph is just a blatant space filler, in order to use up this little bit of a gap that would have screamed at you horribly if I hadn't have filled it with what seems like some totally useless copy but is, in fact, *utterly* useless copy. And look! There's still some space left. I tell you what, you can use it as a notepad. Aren't we generous!

Who the hell does our new Ed think she is?

For this month at least, Linda Barker's been editing AA, she thought she was going to stay in the comfy Ed's chair for a while but she's now been moved on to another mag! I asked her to tell you lot a bit about herself.

It's a difficult question to answer, but I'll do my best. My name is Linda Marie Barker and I was born, a few years ago (ahem), in the Salvation Army Mother's Hospital in Hackney, London. I went to school, did loads of exams and then left my Hackney home for Norwich. I lived there for three years and never wanted to leave. I wanted to spend my days wandering through town, admiring the cathedral grounds and paddling in the river. I wanted to take the slow train to Sheringham or Cromer whenever I felt like drawing pictures in the sand, buying old china and eating crabsticks in their natural habitat. That was what I did for three years of my life, then I got a job.

I moved to Bath just over two years ago to take up the position of Staff Writer on Your Sinclair, and now I'm in the big Ed's chair at AA. I was looking forward to working on AA but the powers that be had other plans and I'm off to

edit Amiga Power next month. Mind you, I'm thrilled about that too.

In my spare time (ha ha) I tend to lay on the sofa and fall asleep - that's the problem with comfy sofas. When I can actually manage to keep my eyes open I'm very partial to a novel or two. If there are no deep, serious forays into literature around to tempt me I go for either a Georgette Heyer regency romance or a children's novel. At the moment I'm dipping into all three.

What else do I like doing? Well inside, there's watching films, reading the music press, listening to music and eating. And outside there's going to gigs, running down hills, eating and spending money.

A few of my favourite things

Sarah Records, The Hit Parade, mussels, potted shrimps, bubble bath, the smell of paint, Chanel No 5, anything yellow, daisies, trees, grass, being in bed, Rupert Brooke, Bruce Chatwin, BMX Bandits, holidays, the seaside, cats, dogs, bubble gum, diet coke.



So How Do You Spell That?

In the current trend of name changes (well, just the one, being Jon Nash/Pillar), we conducted an indepth survey.

Colin Campbell 'Beelzebub Staffthrasher'
Linda Barker 'Nancy Hazlewood'
Andy Ounsted 'Studs Ramrod'
Simon Forrester 'Raspberry Feedback'
Nick Aspell 'Salvador Dali'
Rod Lawton 'Stig Bog'
Pat MacDonald 'Akira Ramashita'

And before we get floods of mail, Andy Ounsted is the art editor on *Your Sinclair*, and Pat MacDonald used to be techie edi-

The End Bit

And as another issue draws to a close, we bid goodbye to yet another editor, and look towards ways of making the new sucker's life a complete miserable tortured hell. Oh well, it keeps us happy. Send your Subs letters to Amstrad Action Subs Club, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. Thankyou and goodnight.



Greetings

Oh no, here we go again. Just when you thought it was safe to go to the letter box, another copy of AA landed on the mat. Now you'll have to wade through a load of old drivel from the team, carefully disguised as the Subs Club newsletter (that's the drivel that's disguised, not you or the team – although Simon did once come into the office disguised as a short essay on transcendentalism by Ralph Waldo Emerson, but that's another story).

Tim's bit

So, old loves, what's been happening? We've been busy making music here at AA Towers these last few weeks. First there was the long-awaited arrival (well, we'd been waiting a few days, anyway) of the French-programmed Soundtrakk. Groovy? Yes we think so.

Then Simon brought in BooTracker and we thought that was groovy too. So groovy, in fact, that we decided to do the show right there in the barn. No, that's not right (that Mickey Rooney, eh?). No, we decided right there and then to shove it on the covertape and let you have a go for yourself. Yes, that's right. I ought to get some rest. And what else?

Press junket

In mid-March (I know it seems a long time ago now, but we have to get a bit ahead of ourselves in the magazine lark – we start our Christmas issues in September).

But I digress. In mid-March I ventured to London Town Divine in search of fame, fortune and a free lunch at the invitation of Mr Alan Sugar. He sat me (and hundreds of other hacks) down in the

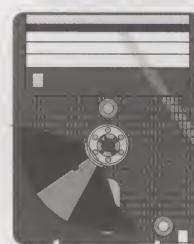


Tim... Again.

directors' suite at the Science Museum and showed us his company's latest product – the Pen Pad (aka the Personal Digital Assistant, no really). There's a brief news story about it in the mag and as soon as we get hold of one I'll give you the full run-down. The long and the short of it, though, is that it's quite a fab new invention which recognizes your handwriting and converts it to computer-type text for storage.

'Whatever next?' I idly mused as I toyed with my poached salmon and vegetable roulade, trying not to feel insignificant alongside the newspaper journos. I didn't come up with anything (I was distracted by the potato salad) but one chap I know insists that computer equipment will all soon be controlled by a glowing orb which will detect our brainwaves and interpret our unspoken instructions. (Although he usually thinks this late at night when his machine's crashed for the seventy-fifth time and he wishes he were at home.)

Still, on with the show, as they say. We've got something of a corking issue for you, with storage, disc drives, tutorials, games, spelling mistakes, typing errors and a sack load of grumpy letters. I love working in magazines, me.



Be With Who You Wanna Be

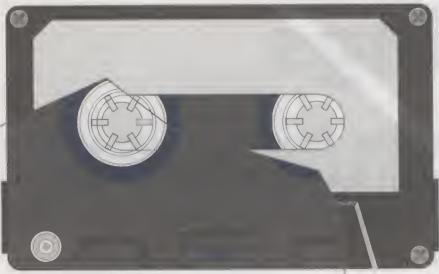
In the vein of last months subs club, we're continuing (or is that 'milking'? yes, it probably is) the searching question theme.

This month, we ask who the team would most and least like to be stuck in a lift with...

Tim (Acting Editorial Controller Second Class B Team Reserve): I'd most like to be stuck in a lift with a lift engineer (we'd just like to point out that this gag has been used before, but it was his idea then, as well, honest) and I'd least like to be with anyone from breakfast television.

Simon (Staff Writer): I'd get stuck with Florence from the Magic Roundabout (We had to ask. – TN), and I'd probably curl up and die if I was stuck up with an anti-smoker.

Nick (Art Editor): If there was anyone I'd like to get stuck with it'd have to be Patsy Kensit (Oh no, WHSmiths will never stock the mag now), and I'd least like to end up with any politician (he had trouble narrowing it down).



Inside Out

From this month on we'll be taking you through a different area of how AA is slapped loosely together, to widen your horizons, and give us a bit of sympathy for all our hard work.

So this month, cassettes...

Following Colin Campbell's promise to all of you two months back, it's been chaos here at the AA office. Well, I've been running around panicking, even if no-one else has. You may remember the letter we're talking about, involving Colin considering it all to be 'exceptional value for money'?

Well anyway – the first tape, containing Tasword, took off to a flying start, for everyone except 464 owners, who all rang us up (I reckon that was pretty much all of them) to find out why their word processor wasn't working. Oh well, such is life.

This month has been a sort of ego trip for me (I'm Simon, by the way), as BooTracker has landed slap bang on the tape.

How's it all done?

Despite appearances to the contrary, these things aren't just bashed together. Finding the software, acquiring the licence and getting hold of a copy of it (as troublesome as all that is) is just the beginning.

Once we've found the software, we have to turn it into a covertape for you. We send it all off to be compiled into an exciting tape. The programs are put together and a loader is written which gives you the menu you use to choose the program you want to run.

Hopeless old drivel

Here at AA, we receive a lot of drivel. No, actually, we receive an absolutely huge amount of drivel.

The mail arrives – it's full of drivel. The phone rings – someone talks drivel to us. We walk down the street – people shout drivel from across the road. We're sick of it, frankly, so we're going to make a few suggestions.

We've already given you a few handy hints that'll help you get your letters published, but we didn't mention complaints and grumbles.

So, how about, in the future, when you have a problem with the way AA is going, don't just ring up and tell us what you hate (one unnamed chap spent half an hour on the phone giving us a hard time about the mag recently and he didn't really have any specific dislikes, he just hadn't enjoyed it). We produce the magazine for you, after all, so if you don't like it you have to

The master disc then goes to the duplicators where pre-production copies of the covertape are made and sent back to us. Once we get the pre-prods, we shove them in our vast collection of CPCs and check that they all work (except last month when we forgot to check them on the 464 – but we all make mistakes).

Once we've agreed that the tape's okay, it goes back to the duplicators and they get to work on producing enough copies of the tape to mount one on each copy of the mag.

Stick it

In the mean time, of course, we've designed (and had printed) the tape inlay so that has to be folded and stuck in the box. And, of course, we've also had to make sure the printing on the cassettes has been sorted out too.

So, the tapes are all duplicated and shoved in their boxes (with the inlays) and sent to the cover-mounting people who stick them neatly to the covers of the mags.

But what now?

At the time of writing, the program for AA93 has not yet been decided, but that's not a problem (well, not a huge one, anyway). What is a problem, however, is that we'll eventually run out of ideas for software. So here's what you've got to do.

If you've used a piece of serious software in the past, and think it should go on the covertape, send along details of the software, the company selling it, and your own name and address, and we'll see what we can do. A few points you might like to follow though:

- ★ It can't have appeared on the tape before.
- ★ It can't be like other covertape software (we won't do another word processor, for instance).
- ★ It's got to be worth some moolah.
- ★ It has to be a package that's available on tape (we can sort out the disc side of things).

So send any ideas to:

**Eureka!, Amstrad Action,
30 Monmouth Street,
BATH, BA1 2BW.**

say so. But don't just moan at us (no one likes being moaned at and it usually doesn't get the results you want). Instead, why not actually say what you think we ought to change?

One thing though – don't tell us to review more games. Hundreds of you write in and phone in and insist that we need to do more games reviews. Sadly for you chaps, we review every game that arrives in the office, and then go out looking for more. There are no games left to review. We don't ignore them just to annoy you – they're not there.

We'll probably be doing a reader survey thang in the near future, but if you really need to let off steam before you explode, feel free to write in and hammer us. It's the only way we'll find out what you think, but make it helpful. No one likes being slagged off, and we're really not in a position to tell you to go and get stuffed – that would be unprofessional – so just giving us an unreasoned hard time isn't really fair. Is it?

Star Of The Month

Now we've got a really famous chappy for you this month, so Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, this is your life.

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813 - 1855)

- Born in Copenhagen in 1813.
- Educated in theology in Copenhagen (although he interested himself more in literature and philosophy).
- He was engaged, but broke it off because God had meant him to be a writer, not a lover.
- He wrote wholly from his strong personal belief in the importance of the individual and of deliberate free-thinking choice.
- His philosophical views were in direct opposition with the dominant German opinions of the day (notably those of Georg Hegel).
- And subsequently became the founder of existentialism.
- He opposed organized religions, as they quashed the individual, and encouraged individual belief systems, and personal idols.
- He died.
- Then he became important.
- Bummer, eh?

Source: Chambers Biographical Dictionary (fifth edition), edited by Magnus Magnusson – 1990.

Amstrad Action

We just plod on with Subs Club and never seem to get any reaction at all.

Do you enjoy it? Do you not? Do you care? What do you want us to do with it? (Bear in mind that the powers that be won't let us stop doing it and that it's secondary to our principal objective – producing a magazine.)

Please write to us at:

**All I want from the Subs Club,
Amstrad Action,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath BA1 2BW.**

The Living End

It's all over for another month – just when we were starting to enjoy ourselves. We'll probably be back next month (it keeps us off the streets) but in the mean time, send your letters to

Amstrad Action Subs Club,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW.

Good night, and may your dog go with you.

AMSTRAD ACTION

What ho!

I say, you chaps, it's another copy of the AA Subs Club newsletter. We hunted high and low, hither and yon, in search of interesting things to tell you about this month but we couldn't find any.

Instead, we just let Simon loose with a freshly sharpened pencil and a dodgy sense of humour and waited patiently for the results of his mighty labours. The jury's still out on whether it was worth the wait.

Still, there's always Tim's bit...

Tim's bit

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there lived... no, hang on, that's not relevant to anything at all - I don't know what came over me.

So, what have we been doing this month? Er, nothing much, really. It's been one of those months. (One of what months, exactly? What does that mean?) It's been the sort of month that just comes and goes without anyone really noticing it. We kept coming in here, doing our usual stuff and then going home. Still, at least it's not raining... oh no, wait a minute - it is.

We spent some time pondering the mysteries of the universe (we often do that, it's more fun than proof-reading the type-ins). Anyway, there we were, pondering away and I said, in my usual candid and forthright way, 'Aren't some adventure games crap?' My reasoning was that so often the puzzles are just so completely off the wall, out of left field, and generally bizarre that no one has a celluloid cat in a volcano's chance of solving them.

I gave an exaggerated example (I'm nothing if not thoroughly unreasonable). There you are in an empty room. You know, by some means or other, that there's a secret door in there. You try everything you can think of to open it. Nothing happens. You give in and send for the clue sheet.

It arrives and it turns out the secret door only opens if you hold the sacred dagger between the thumb and middle finger of your right hand, put the Mystic Ruby of Quarn in your underpants, spin round three times, stand on your head and say 'eschew obfuscation' four times in a dodgy Welsh accent. Of course. Why didn't you think of that before? It's obvious when you think about it, isn't it?

If you want a job done...

Anyway, we decided that the only way to get away from this sort of old cobblers was to write our own adventures - hence the new series, Venture Forth. The adventure we're writing isn't actually all that exciting (it's about doing the laundry), but we wanted to give you a starting point for your own adventures. When it's all done (in a few months time) we might offer a little prize to the writer of the best new adventure. Or maybe not. Who can tell?

Are you still here? Get on and read the rest of the newsletter or it'll get cold.



It's still Tim...

Secret Life Of A GX4000

We're not sure if many people have noticed this yet, but the GX4000 is quite a bit more than you would at first think. Starting out as a mere film prop for the American hit TV series Land Of The Giants, the GX4000 (or 'G' to his friends), coloured a rather drastic red,



GX4000, console to the stars.

played the part of the explorer's ship, performing all his own stunts, and writing many a script.

Like all media stars, the GX has had some more slightly dodgy film appearances, amongst which his cameo in East Enders (ugh!), when contrasted with the other actors, allowed him to show his true acting ability and save the show from extinction.

Recently, though, 'G' has been showing more than acting ability. Employed by NASA for wind tunnel research, his aerodynamic features are helping with the development of some of America's latest fighter planes. In fact, he'll be working on the new... (Snip. - Ed)

Fighting Back

Ten possible reasons we still haven't seen Street Fighter II from France (where it's being developed).

- The programmer was a victim of a bizarre gardening accident.
- The wind's blowing in the wrong direction.
- France sunk.
- US Gold want to see how many times we print the same Next Month picture.
- We're at war with France (again).
- It was released months ago but we couldn't be bothered to review it.
- The developers got slightly offended after reading the Subs Club-ish 93 letter.
- It's been censored for violence and will re-emerge as Street Counsellor II.
- The programmers are waiting for a sprite utility to appear on the covertape so they can get down to work.
- There's no such thing as Street Fighter II, it was all just a dream.

Inside Out

Hi there, and welcome to the second in a series of insights on how AA is flung together and reaches the shelves. This month, we'll be looking at how a page is made:

- The whole thing starts with a long-suffering staff writer, (*I wonder who wrote this, then. – Ed*) or one of the freelancers, providing the raw text. This text is run through a spelling checker, and handed to Tim.
- Tim's job is a long one. First, he loads it into his word processor, and subs (sub edits) it. This means he alters sentences, paragraphs, and whole passages of text until he's happy that it's suitable for publication.
- Next, the text is imported into a blank page of the magazine, in the format of the DTP package (Quark XPress™) that AA is produced on.
- At this point, Nick gets hold of the page, and starts putting the various bits of copy (text) into little boxes, draws the pictures, spruces

everything up and turns a white page with black text into the multi-colour visual treats that you see in the mag.

- Obviously, the text is not always going to fit exactly to the end of the page, so the whole shebang is passed back to Tim, who adds or removes paragraphs, sentences, and sometimes even juggles single words to make the text fit.
- When the page has been printed and meticulously checked, it's sent to the linotronic department at Future, who turn the computer file into a series of films, representing the four basic colours on a page – cyan, magenta, yellow, and black.
- These films are then sent to the printers by Nick, and that's the last the team ever sees of them, until we get a box full of finished magazines back from the printers about a week and a half later.

Isn't technology wonderful?

Get Involved!

Far be it for us to carry a theme too far, but with the involvement theme still very much in force, we present the AA guide to becoming a professional wrestler! All you have to do is follow this guide on your very first match:

- Walk on and pose, showing muscles. It helps if you've got some, but if you haven't, just press your arm against your body whilst posing.
- Lap up crowd response. The industry standard is exaggerated hand to ear movements, etc.
- Read the script. Not that we think wrestling's staged or anything – honestly, we don't.
- Start the match. The crowd just love it if you break the other guys arm instead of shaking his hand, but only if you've been designated the bad guy this time.
- Bounce off the ropes. Wholly unnecessary, but it looks really good.
- Wipe the floor with some guys face. If it's your turn.
- Start a career in the movies. Don't worry – you'll already have the acting experience. It's a logical progression, really.

Star Of The Month

Thomas Edison (1847 - 1931)

Probably the most famous inventor to appear in recent times, he was born in Milan, Ohio. In his early years, he was considered retarded, expelled from school (that's what they did to retards in those days). He then went on to edit his own railroad newspaper, the Grand Trunk Herald.

Amongst his inventions are the electric vote recording machine, the ticker-tape automatic repeater (the

profits from which allowed him to set up his research laboratory in New Jersey in 1871.

According to the patent office, he grossed 1000 original inventions, amongst which (and those he was most famous for) were the gramophone (1877), the light bulb (1879), the megaphone, the battery, and 'talkies' (films accompanied by sound).

He's also responsible for the discovery of thermionic emission known, funnily

enough, as the Edison Effect.

He's also responsible for the career of Nichola Tesla, who used to work with Edison, and was responsible for the improved dynamo, and various other electric devices (and supposedly the development of radio waves before Marconi, though this was never proved).

Acknowledgments and stuff to Chambers Biographical Dictionary.

Get Off My Desk!

Here at AA, a lot of tat comes through the door under the guise of mail and 'opinions'. So the two nominees for the coveted 'Get That Letter Off My Desk' award goes to Leonard of Telford, for his endless unhelpful criticism, and Robert Harle – SNES owners are just people with a damned sight more money than you, you're a twit, and 'Hello' to your Mum!

More Polls...

More 'getting to know the team' stuff. This month we ask "What were you doing before journalism? (Well, pretend journalism anyway)".

Tim said, "Loads of stuff. Who wants to know?" We told him it was you, the reader. "I learned how to design and program computers for a bit. I worked for a bit. Then I studied history."

Nick answered "I was at college," and fell into a rather depressed silence.

Simon proudly announced that he worked with handicapped children who had a penchant for spraying various bodily fluids all over him.

What a team, eh? They were never like that in your day, were they? Kids!

The Living End

And that, as they say, is that. We're almost certain to be back next month (it's in our contracts or something) so send your letters to

Amstrad Action Subs Club,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW.

Good-night, sweet reader, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

AMSTRAD ACTION

AMSTRAD ACTION

Watcha

It's that time again. We're not sure who came up with the idea for these subs club things, but they're a pleasant diversion for us, so we just seem to carry on with them.

This month we've managed to unearth secret government files which show, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the CPC has been playing an important rôle in international affairs during the last few years.

First, though, as always, there's Tim's bit. (We just can't seem to stop him. We've tried, really we have, but he just keeps coming in here and writing stuff...)

Tim's bit

Hello, my precious ones. What's new?

We've been labouring mightily here in the stygian gloom that is the AA office... actually, I don't know if I've mentioned this before but I can't see a window from here. We're stuck here in a little corridor bit and we don't get any natural light at all. That can't be good for a chap, can it?

Anyway, things have been a little bit more cheerful round here lately, thanks to the dodgy weather. Freak atmospheric conditions mean that we can get Radio One on the office stereo (it usually doesn't penetrate the fifteen layers of pre-stressed concrete between us and the outside world) so we've been shaking our funky stuff down to the ground and generally having a wild old time of it. Sadly, we don't start work until about 9.30, so we miss the Breakfast Show, but that Simon Bates fellow isn't so bad. I nearly met him once, but he was busy in his studio talking to some chaps in suits.

And the winner is...

To judge from the mail we get here, there are still plenty of new CPC users out in the world and we thought what was needed was some sort of round up of all that was best and utterly fab and groovy in terms of CPC kit.

So I set the Hairy Happening to work to get an awards ceremony organised. How difficult can it be? All you've got to do is assemble a top-notch jury, hire some celebs to dish out the gongs, find a venue and some decent caterers, get a haircut, and rent a dinner suit and you're away. You need some publicity, some trophies, a band, and a really good looking lectern for your host to stand behind. No problem.

Mmm, that's a tough one

Apparently, though, it did all prove to be something of a problem and we settled, instead, for one of our feature-type things with loads of pretty pictures and stuff. It's what we're good at, really. I mean the BBC can put an awards ceremony together, but I bet they couldn't do a magazine. They could? Damn.

Still, I can't hang about here all day chatting, I've got some washing up to do, then I've got to get the grass cut, and...



Tim and his spectacles.

Another team survey

We've been rude enough to ask you to reply to some personal questions in our Reader Survey this month, so we thought we'd better spill a few more beans about ourselves. What, we asked each other, is your most annoying habit?



Sometimes people get really cross.

Tim (that nice editor chappie): Did I tell you about the time I went to Weston Super Mare with some friends from university and one of them ate so much candyfloss, cockles, toffee apples and fish and chips that she was sick on the way home? I don't answer personal questions. Do you find that annoying?

Simon (that nice writer fellow): According to you lot I say 'oh-ar, yeah' a lot. Is that annoying? I don't think it is. My desk's always untidy, is that annoying? What about oversleeping?

Nick (that nice crayon-wielder): I haven't got any annoying habits. Did I tell you about this really interesting graphics program I've got here? Look, you can add all sorts of interesting effects... (Snip. – Ed)

Star Of The Month

This month's star is one of the Ed's heroes, the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.

- He was born in Shadwell, Virginia in 1743.
- From 1767 he practised law with considerable success.
- He became heavily involved in politics and helped convene the first Continental Congress.
- He drafted the Declaration of Independence.
- His political career took off in a big way, first as governor of Virginia and later in various posts in George Washington's government, culminating in his appointment to Secretary of State in 1789.
- He withdrew from public life in 1794.
- But in 1797 he came back when he was called to be Vice President of the United States.
- In 1801 he was chosen as President and he was subsequently re-elected for a second term.
- He was the last intellectual in US politics.
- He helped found the University of Virginia in 1825.
- He died in 1826.

CPCs in the NEWS

CPC Wins UN Sovereignty Battle

It isn't widely known that the records department of the United Nations relies heavily on CPCs to keep an eye on all the goings-on of this mighty international organization. And now, thanks to a CPC 6128, the people of the small Central American state of Guacamole are independent again.

Clerks in the UN's records department uncovered a dreadful thirty year-old administrative error during a routine search of their CPC's database.

It seems that since January 1963, Guacamole had been fighting a UN ruling which said that it was part of the new Luxembourg Empire, even though UN officials at the time privately admitted it was an administrative error. Over the years, Guacamole's struggles were forgotten but the CPC brought the error to light and everything has been put straight.

The Guacamole controversy began in October 1962 when, during an emergency meeting of the Security Council following the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was suggested by the

Israeli delegate that they should send out for some take away food. Delegates voted in favour of Mexican and their orders were taken by a young UN clerk. Unfortunately, when the food had been delivered, the orders were accidentally filed (instead of being destroyed) and Luxembourg's order, which said simply 'Luxembourg would like Guacamole', was debated by a sovereignty sub-committee and passed by a majority of six to one.

The error was spotted almost immediately by UN Secretary General, U Thant, but even he was unable to overturn the committee's ruling. Guacamole appealed at once but the paper work was overlooked and nothing was done until last year when the CPC spotted the old ruling on the files.

The President of newly-independent Guacamole said, "I'm sorry, I don't speak any English." Sources close to the President confirmed that this is, indeed, the case and invited reporters to come back in the morning when the government had sobered up a bit.

We've scoured the news files here at AA and we've managed to unearth a few top CPC-related stories that, for some reason, never made it into AmScene. We never knew the CPC was so famous...

Coffee Break Brain Teaser

If Peter owns a CPC and is taller than Carol, Sally is older than John, and David sold his CPC to a woman in Skegness called Ann, how long would it take a small hamlet to construct a model of the famous architect and clog dancer, Sir Christopher Wren, from moist paper towels?

(From the Sidcup Herald in 1986)

Don't forget to
fill in your
Reader Survey
on pages
24 and 25.

Medieval Scholarship

Historians at Bristol University have been using an Amstrad CPC to interpret the mystical ravings of a Medieval monk who claimed to have prophetic visions.

He was so afraid of persecution by the Church and his own monastic order that he wrote his prophesies in a bizarre code which, until now, no one had been able to decipher. But clued-up researchers wrote a complex language-recognition routine for their CPC 464 and are now able to read the old monk's ravings.

"It took the team quite a while to solve the problem but we've done it now," said a spokesman. "The trouble is, we're not sure if it was worth it. We deciphered the words, but we can't make out what the old fool was on about."

And nor are we. Here's an extract from one of the monk's prophesies:

"And as I looked out upon the seas of the world they turned to a mighty onion soup with crispy croutons. and many of the beasts therein began to sing that truly they would get by with a little help from their friends..."

"...The cattle and other beasts of the field shall begin to leap with mighty leaping. And a seven headed goat with horns of burnished anthracite shall speak forth, saying that they should close cover before striking, maximum load eight persons, e pluribus unum, deus ex machina, please stand on the right and stop when red light is flashing..."

"...And the king of Jerebethmazoa shall

bring war on the Seven Princes of the Outer Reaches and great shall be his folly. The seven princes shall have seven squires. The seven squires shall tend seven horses. The seven horses shall carry seven spears. The seven spears shall have seven blades. And how many shall then go to St Ives?"

Now that the words have been finally decoded, the Bristol researchers are uncertain how to proceed.

"We thought we were going to uncover something of real academic significance," said the disappointed spokesman, "but it seems he was just another medieval halfwit who'd had one too many sips at the mead jar. Still, the language recognition program's really neat. Have you seen my blue pen?"

So much for scholarship, then.

The End

This is the end, beautiful friend, the end.

Send your letters to
Amstrad Action Subs Club,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW.

Good-night, good-night! Parting is such sweet sorrow that I shall say good-night till it be morrow.

AMSTRAD ACTION

AMSTRAD ACTION

Yes?

A crisis nearly occurred this month to mar your uninterrupted enjoyment of the subscriber newsletter – we nearly didn't write this intro bit.

Tim was just about to okay it when he realized that it was exactly the same as the last one. He nearly left it like that just to see if you were paying attention but we persuaded him it would be a really bad idea. So here, instead, is a completely new, all-singing, all-dancing intro with guitars and four part harmony. Enjoy.

Tim's bit

Sit down while I tell you a tale.

The publishing of magazines is a funny old business (Brian). As editor, I'm assumed to be the chap responsible for the content and all that – certainly I'm legally responsible for it. But lurking in a small office over the way is a chap called Colin and he's my publisher. No one knows quite what it is that he does and my only dealings with him are when he says 'nice issue' or changes my cover. Completely

Now, if you speak to him he'll insist that he doesn't interfere, but I know different. The other day, for instance, I said, 'Can we have a cover meeting today?'

He asked why and I said, 'Because we spend hours coming up with ideas and then have a meeting about it and you change everything.' He was hurt and denied that this was true.

Street Fighter Who?

So, anyway, we came up with our ideas and went in to the meeting. He changed them. But (this time) for the better. The gist of our discussion was that, despite the fact that it had been

promised for ages and every other format had had it (even the Spectrum), we still hadn't seen *Street Fighter II* on the CPC. We decided to try to find out what's going on and the beginnings of our research are on page 48. If all goes according to plan, we should be able to let you know even more next month when ace reporter Simon Forrester has been to France to meet the programmers. Well, maybe.

Another perfect day in paradise

Other than that, though, things have been trotting along quite sedately. We still haven't seen the sun. Simon still listens to raucous music. Nick still flicks elastic bands at Simon. I still don't know what's going on.

Still, I mustn't hold you up any longer, you've got a magazine to read...



Mr Norris is 28

That old team survey

This month we ask, 'What's your favourite phrase this month?'

Simon: Do you have to open graves to find girls to fall in love with?

Tim: You ain't the Devil. Where's my waitress?

Nick: Fill 'em full of dread, then drill 'em full of lead.



Here's a little clue to one of them.

It just so happens that they're all quotes – one from an advert, one from a film, and one from a song. And because we think they're pretty obscure we're prepared to offer a small prize to someone who writes in with a correct guess or three. We'll give £20 to the first card out of the hat with all three correct. If no one gets three, we'll give £10 to the first with only two, or, if there aren't any with two, a fiver to the first picked with just one. We'll be lenient, so someone's bound to get at least five quid.

Er, rules: One entry each, the editor's decision is the last word, no correspondence entered into, we can make up any other rules we like, the winning card will be drawn on 3 August 1993 (in the afternoon), so get your card here by then.

Star Of The Month

This month we look at the star of one of the most bizarre Monty Python sketches – Marcel Proust.

- He was born in Paris in 1871.
- He was disabled and was cosseted by his mother.
- Her death in 1905 left him without much desire to carry on his life and he became an introspective recluse.
- He set about examining human's inner emotions and expressing them as art.
- He attempted to write about experience, not on the superficial level of the realists, but at the deeper level of emotion.
- He died in 1922.
- He became the subject of the Summarising Proust Competition on Monty Python's Flying Circus.
- Curiously enough, although it's one of the world's most famous (and certainly one of the longest) works of modern literature, no one has ever actually read *À la recherche du temps perdu*.
- Actually, that's not true, but the people that have read it didn't understand it.
- (That's enough Proust for now. – Ed)

Random Ramblings

Goodbye

It's with a heavy heart that **AA** bids farewell to its long running sister publication, Your Sinclair. YS ran for a monumental 93 issues, carrying the enormous responsibility that comes with being a crap (in a funky skillo sort of way) mag.

We'd just like to point out right now, though, that this in no way spells doom for AA, no way. Anyone who tells you otherwise is full of it, because we're pretty confident that the

Hello

first people to know will be us. So there. Slightly hotter news (which'll be stone cold and undrinkable by the time you come to read this) is that Future Publishing has just bumped its console mag count up to a massive eight. The two titles we're now publishing are Sega Zone and Game Zone (which is where the infamous Adam Peters went).

The important implications of this news are that now, whichever console mag you buy, it's

After a lengthy editorial meeting we, Amstrad Action, foolishly, and in the face of strong opposition, agreed to allow Simon Forrester (*The Hairy Happening*) free rein with page two of the newsletter.

Amstrad Action's guide to the Universe

In order to provide all you young impressionable readers with a bit of moral guidance, you can now follow our new series of things to remember through life.

The first two:

- Never trust anyone wearing green.
 - What is apparent to the individual is not necessarily apparent to the observer.
- Discuss.

Bits and Pieces

Covertapes

As usual, we're still looking for ideas for covertape software. Anyone who knows of a game that would be suitable should write to us and tell us the name of the game, the sale price, and the software house. Don't worry if you don't have all the details, but really would make our lives a lot more bearable if you could send as much information as possible.

This is where the subs club really is important, you see, as it helps us to act on the opinions of the most important **AA** readers – the subscribers.

Get Going!

In this issue there's a review of a wonderful game, *Trakers*. The only reason I'm bringing this up is to point out that the game was written and marketed by a homebrew team. So what? Well, doesn't it say something?

Trakers scored 92%. If they can do that, so can you! Why not give it a go? If a game is sent to us and it's absolutely abysmal, we'll tell you and let you decide whether to let us review it. If it's good, though, you stand to make a bit of cash and hold the scene up for a bit. Why not give it a try?

This blob was left over from last month and we liked it.

Freeloading

The one thing **AA** is always good at is getting everyone else to come up with the ideas. Now it's your turn. Each month, you'll find a feature in the mag. As you've seen, these features can cover pretty much any topic reader want to know about.

The easiest way for us to find out what you want to see, though, is to get y'all to write in with ideas for features, and subjects you'd like to know more about, making each feature a lot more relevant to a lot more people.

Send any ideas you've got on an envelope, postcard, etc, to our usual address.

FIN

Send your letters to
Amstrad Action Subs Club,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW.

The characters and events portrayed in this newsletter are in no way intended to resemble actual people and events. There is no such magazine as Amstrad Action.

A Month In The Life

So what exactly happened this month in AA? Well, we all have our personal goals:

- Tim managed to insult one more reader every day.
- Nick gratuitously included his name in every picture he drew.
- Simon managed to eat a kebab for every page he wrote.
- Colin saved a record amount of money by firing the whole team and replacing them with a cunning program Simon wrote.

AMSTRAD ACTION

AMSTRAD ACTION

SUBS' CLUB

Yikes

Speed is the theme of the issue this month and isn't it uncanny how fast the turnover of editors is on AA? Rod stays here for yonks, then you get three within a year. Don't panic! It's nothing personal. It's just that AA gets the highest calibre editors and they're prone to getting poached. Same goes for the art editors - AA's got a new one of those too. Anyway this letter we're going to reveal the full truth behind the comings and goings, and introduce you to the new face. You have been warned.

All change!

Right, deep breath, here goes... Tim has gone, and he's taken his spectacles with him. Nick's gone too. But where you ask? Well, cast your minds back to last month's Subs Club letter and you might recall that Tim mentioned that Future Publishing had just acquired two console (spit) magazines - Sega Zone and Game Zone. Well Tim's gone to edit the first and Nick's now art editor on the second.

That Simon all on his own. Okay he's the Amstrad genius around here and could probably write the whole mag on his own if we let him, but, to tell the truth, his grammar's appalling, he's got the organisational skills of a slightly scatty wombat and his grasp of layout - well, there's an example of Simon's attempt at art editing just over there to the right a bit (but he is, of course, a excellent and valued writer, or, at least, that's what Tim told me to say).

New Blood

So it was time to bring in the cavalry, in the form of Dave Golder (that's me) and Andy Ounsted. If you're a long time reader of AA you'll have seen

my name in the mag before - but I'm not telling you when. If you remember, by all means write in to let me know; there might even be a prize in the offing (but probably not). I've come across from AA sister 8-bit magazine *Commodore Format*, and I've got big plans for AA to make sure it's the essential peripheral for all CPC owners - but feel free to let me know what you want from the magazine by writing in to Reaction.

Andy has also moved over from an 8-bit magazine, the recently departed and really quite crap in a funky skillo sort of way, *Your Sinclair*. He's already brought his very individual touch to the mag, I think you'll agree.

Anyway, I hope you like what we're doing with your favourite mag. Read on and enjoy.



Simon's attempt at lay-out.

The way it began...

Do you realize that issue 96 is divisible by 12? Exciting, huh? But seriously, think about it. 12 months

to a year... yup, that means AA has been going now for (hang on while I get my calculator) eight years!

And here we have that very first first issue from October 1985. The editor back then was Pete Connor, aided by Bob Wade (reviews editor) and Trevor Gilham (art editor).

Boulderdash was reviewed and scored 93 per cent; *Way Of The Exploding Fist* went one per cent better. There was around up of word processors (some things never change) and industry insiders gave their opinion on, 'The machine of the future'.

And guess who bought that very first issue? Yep, our very Simon Forrester. Well, he bought it through back issues, actually, and he's still a late starter today.



Eye, eye, I spy the start of an era

Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month.

Games Dave *Rick Dangerous 2*
 Simon *Prehistorik 2 (still!!)*
 Andy *Top Trumps - Motorbikes edition*

TV Dave *Jimmy Saville's Guide to Scarborough on The Travel Show*
 Simon *Deep Space Nine*
 Andy *MARried With Children*

Music Dave *Madder Rose (Don't ask)*
 Simon *We're not sure because every time he puts it on it's so loud we can't hear what's he's saying*
 Andy *Midnight Oil (Andy's latest haircut is a homage to the lead singer)*

Food Dave *Honey flavoured Greek-yoghurts*
 Simon *Kebabs*
 Andy *Alphabetty spaghetti*

Random Ramblings

The totally irrelevant corner

- "May the fleas of a thousand camels infest your armpits." An old Middle Eastern insult.
- Where exactly is the car in the chariot scene in *Ben Hur*. None of us have ever spotted it, even with the video on frame search.

What do you do with a dead GX?

As we point out in our cart feature this month the GX4000 could easily have used a spaceship in cheap science fiction series. It's just a pity *Blake's Seven* wasn't still being produced – they once used two hairdryers stuck together as a space ship so they probably could have used a few GX4000s as an entire fleet. And was it just me or did the liberator look like it was flying backwards?

But what else could a GX4000 be adapted

for use as in a naff science fiction film? A quick poll in the AA office came up with the following suggestions:

- A discus-type weapon
- A pair of futuristic binoculars
- A tricorder (whatever one of them is)
- A flying skateboard-type thingy for very small aliens (that was one of Simon's)
- A portable pizza maker
- A games console (oh, very funny – Simon)



Is that another badly-disguised GX4000?

And yet more stuff

Naff cover of the month award # 1



Oh, come on! Did Loriciel really think they'd get away with this cover? Well, they did for over four years. But now AA exposes them for this utterly bilgesome and utterly sexist piece of artwork.

What is that woman doing? And why does she have to stick her bum out to do it? And where did that sudden breeze that just happens to blow up her skirt come from. From the fevered imagination of some depraved artist – an artist so sad he even proudly puts his initials in there. Well, EP, you are now the recipient of AA's first ever Complete Jackson Pollock award for appalling cover artwork. A big round of applause and a wet kipper for EP.

If you know of any games that have got even worse covers, by all means write in and tell us about them. Send your suggestions to the usual address (which, in case you've forgotten it, is printed at the bottom of this page).

Tim said that
we weren't
allowed to get
rid of this blob.

Simon's Film Review: *Kafka's The Trial*

Was he off his head? What was this all about? What was Agent Cooper doing in it? And why was he wearing that silly suit? These are just a few of the questions you'll be asking after you've seen *The Trial*. Oh, yeah. I forgot the most important one – I want my money back. Call me old fashioned, but I like a plot. (*Heathen! This was high art and thought provoking stuff – Dave*). One for intellectual snobs only – hah!

If this was a film this is the bit where we'd get al corny and play something like the Door's The End but it's not so we won't. Instead we'll just give you the address:

Amstrad Action,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW

AMSTRAD ACTION

AMSTRAD ACTION

SUBS' CLUB

Cover-up

There are some big changes in store for the AA covertape.

Next month, and for one month only, we're devoting the whole tape to a single, huge, five-level game – the Blues Brothers. And after that... ah, well, that'd be telling. But one thing's for sure – the games are going to get better and better, we can guarantee it. And we plan to have a few more interactive links between the tape and features in the mag – multi-media or what? All round it's going to mean an even better mag for you, which can't be bad.

Strange behaviour

What a weird month. Simon's been up to his armpits trying to work out the format of the new tape and at the same time coming to terms with the fact that he can't play his thrash metal continuously throughout the day anymore – both Andy and I (the usurpers as Simon likes to think of us) have got our own ideas about what should go on the office tape machine. It's causing friction – Simon stormed out of the office in disgust when Doris Day's dulcet tones wafted out of the corner and over the CPCs; actually this was a cunning ploy so that I could get on to the Plus (which Simon hogs) and play Klax for a while.

Linking theme

One thing you'll notice about the this issue is the way Assembly Line links in with the covetape program, Zapp Assembler. This is the shape of things to come – well, sort of. Hopefully, in the coming months there will be even stronger links between the covetape and features in the mag – links that'll be designed help you to make the most of your CPC. And if all this sounds a bit heavy for you game freaks, don't panic. If you

could see some of the games we're lining up to go on the tape – many of them suggested by you in your letters to Reaction – your tongues would be

hanging (rather unhygienically) on the floor. And as a special treat next month the whole tape is going to be handed over to the excellent *Blues Brothers* – the complete game.



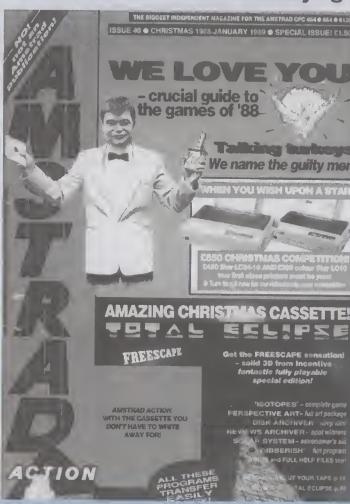
We'll get the Blues next month.

Things go in cycles

Also coming soon will be *Encyclopedia Amstradica* – a cut-out and keep irreverent guide to the history of the CPC. Simon and I are compiling it at the moment, but despite his protests, I'm not including an entry for *Hairest Happening In The CPC World*.

That was the year that was

So was 1988 a vintage year? That's what AA was trying to fathom out back in issue 40. What we're trying



And for a few million dollars more we could have got Billy Crystal.

to fathom out in the AA97 Subs' Club letter, however, is just who decided to let that gruesome visage get on to the cover? Imagine scanning the shelves of Smiths and suddenly having that grimace out from the shelf at you (it's ex-ed Steve Carey, by the way, but he probably won't thank me for mentioning that).

The Game Of '88 was adjudged to be Dark Side (the sequel to Driller) from Incentive while Masters Of The Universe, Plasmatron and Psycho Pigs were awarded Turkey status.

Barbarian (81 per cent) and Operation Wolf (89 per cent) were amongst the new games on review. And, guess what? Yup, there was a feature on word processing. It was sort of par for the course back in those days – every computing magazine had to come with one.

Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month:

Films	Dave	Calamity Jane
	Simon	The Hairy Happening that Ate Manhattan (er, are you sure? – Dave)
	Andy	Hell Drivers
Holidays	Dave	Anywhere that's not Bath (yes, even Staines or Finland).
	Simon	Crete
	Andy	Australia
Biscuits	Dave	Chocolate Hob Nobs
	Simon	Chocolate Hob Nobs
	Andy	Jammy Dodgers (which, incidentally, would be a great name for a band).
Weather	Dave	Hot and snowy.
	Simon	Cold and heavy rain.
	Andy	Hot and sunny.

Random Ramblings

The FES plug – it had to happen

Yup, we're not going to let you forget about it. The Future Entertainment Show is taking place at The Grand Hall, Olympia, London from 11th to 14th of November. And it's going to be amazing. Totally amazing. Anyone who's got anything to sell in the computer world'll be there, including Sega. There'll be all the latest games and state-of-the-art hardware to try out, all the computer gubbins you could ever want to buy on sale. But apart from the obvious stuff, there's also going to be games challenges,

GamesMaster broadcasting live (with new presenter Dexter Fletcher), Radio One broadcasting live, loads of competitions, special guests wandering around, that sort of thing. And tickets, which cost a paltry £6.95, can only be bought in advance – there won't be any on sale on the door. For more info call the Show hotline on 051 356 5085. And don't miss our compo to win free tickets to the show on page 58 of this issue. (We'll probably be there as well, so don't say that we didn't warn you.)

Roy Dibble has been appointed Director of the CCTA – the Government centre for information systems

God, we get sent some really dull press releases sometimes



The FES 2 logo, obviously designed by an Art Editor who doesn't have to cope with mono pages. But we think you'll get the general idea. The show itself will be a corker, you can bet on it.

And yet more stuff

Naff cover of the month award # 2



There are two main categories of naff cover. There are the tasteless ones (like last month's winner, *Pinball Dreams*) and there are the plain badly drawn ones. *Italy 1990*, you may be able to work out for yourself, belongs in the latter group. Is there one footballer on the whole cover who's in a natural position? And what the hell are some of them supposed to be doing? The blokey in the middle seems to be levitating while someone over on the left is pretending to be an aeroplane. There's also a bit of ballet going on in there if I'm not much mistaken. Okay, so it's supposed to be a montage, but is it just me, or does the whole effect end up looking a massive scrap in the school playground? And doesn't the World Cup Trivia Quiz really make you want to rush out and buy it?

We thought the blob was getting a bit dull, so we've tilted it the other way around this month.

Word search

S	U	G	A	R	L	S	M
Q	I	A	N	I	U	A	E
R	T	M	N	Z	Y	R	R
T	A	S	O	D	P	N	U
A	V	T	I	N	Y	I	T
E	E	R	T	Z	O	E	U
H	N	A	C	P	C	I	F
C	A	D	A	V	E	K	J

More fun than Countdown and less irritating than Jeremy Beedle (but then, that's not hard) it's the AA Word Search puzzle.

These are the words to look out for: Amstrad • Action • Andy • CPC • Dave • Sugar • Future • Simon • Cheat • Arnie.

It's the bottom of the page, the end of the Subs' Club, and the bit where we fill up the gap left over with our address, so here it is:

Amstrad Action,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW
Hasn't changed much, has it?

AMSTRAD ACTION '97

AMSTRAD ACTION

SUBS' CLUB

Power corrupts

Dave, being the big important editor-type blokey, corrupted like a disk in a swimming pool this month and had to lie down for a few weeks. Since we hadn't made a back-up (it never seemed important) this meant that somebody else had to write the Subs Club, and there was only one guy left to write it – me, Hairy.

This has a number of repercussions; first, this bit of paper is going to lack the serenity it normally enjoys and secondly, it's going to be stuffed full of irrelevant rubbish (sounds like normal to me – Andy). What's gone on in the world this month, then...?

Coming soon...

I am wonderful. I am fabulous. You really don't know how lucky you are to have the Hairy Happening writing for your magazine. I have not only secured six classic Rafaela Cecca game for the covertape in the coming months, including *Stormlord* for next month, but I've also sorted out an absolute classic to go with issue 100 – get this – *Elite*. Do you really deserve someone as

brilliant as me? (Oh, shut up and make the tea – Andy.)



Hair by Axminster, make-up by cement mixer, clothes by someone who'd rather not be named.

Don't miss out on your vote

Survey time. Yep, on page 57 of this issue you'll find all the voting details you'll need to take part in our Celebratory Centenary Poll. It covers everything from your favourite games and utilities to your favourite issues of Amstrad

Action, so if you want your vote to count get your voting slip in as soon as possible. The deadline is Friday 12th November so you'll need to be sharpish. The results, you may not be surprised to learn, will be printed in issue 100.

First off...

When we all tumbled back into the office this month to kick off the new issue, there was somebody new hanging around, some girl who reckoned she was our new writer. This was news to us... but, good news. Anyone who makes our life easier is all right by us.

But who was she? Where did she come from? How long would she stay? Nobody seemed to know (except possibly Colin the Pub – and we're not sure the nick-name comes from the fact he's our publisher – and he was in Turkey for most of

this month). She said she was called Sarah Tanser and had been assigned to us as a work experience-type person. Which seemed feasible, except for



That Tanser girl – was she a plant? Will we weed her out?

one thing. Every time we needed a photo of her, she seemed to be trying to sneak Virgin logos in. Was this just a coincidence, or was she a spy, sent in to get some Virgin product placement in Amstrad Action?

Whatever the truth behind this mysterious lass, she's done some cracking writing. So, is she a star or a spy in the making? If you ask me she looked just a bit too at home with that gun on page 49.

Die, tarmac!

Yeah, I know we've been going on about it for so long, but this time when we say Street Fighter 2 is coming we really mean it. It's actually down in US Gold's release schedules for November – we've seen it. At first we thought it must be a misprint so we rang up Nicola, our contact at US Gold, and she sort of confirmed that the schedule was right. In other words she said that the game was coming out this side of Christmas, but the November release was still unconfirmed.

But Street Fighter 2 is now closer to being released on the CPC than it's ever been. Let's hope that it's worth the wait.

Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month:

Phrases	Dave	"No you're wrong, Simon"
	Simon	"No, you're wrong, Dave"
	Andy	"Where's my walkman?"

Days	Dave	Pay day
	Simon	Pay day
	Andy	Pay day

Sit coms	Dave	<i>Absolutely fabulous</i>
	Simon	<i>One Foot In The Grave</i>
	Andy	<i>Married With Children</i>

Footwear	Dave	Converse All-Star.
	Simon	Flippers.
	Andy	Doc Martins.

Opposite of acronym (whatever that is) for CPC

Dave	Completely pathetic cucumber
Simon	'Cause policemen can't
Andy	Calculated peanut culling

Random Ramblings

Whose idea was that stupid compo anyway?

It was Dave's actually. Typical. Trust him to do a phone-in competition to win tickets to the FES just days after the issue was supposed to be out. Being new he didn't realise that, despite the fact we get the mag finished on time every month, it always seems to reach the shelves or drop through your letterboxes late (something we are sorting out at the moment). Yes, issue 97 came out two days after you were supposed to phone in.

So what did kind-hearted Dave do? He decided to award the tickets to the first eight

people to ring or write in complaining about how stupid the competition was (even if they didn't quote the code-phrase).

And yes, we did say eight people. Somehow two people – Mr Denyer of Sunningdale and James Seward of Risborough – managed to get a copy on the Tuesday and rang in, with the correct code. How they got their copies in time is a mystery, but they're not related to any of the team in any way. We think. Hang on, has anybody checked with our Advertising team?

Yet more stuff

Naff cover of the month award # 3



I could be wrong but I've got the feeling that the artist who produced this stunning piece of work for Atlantis' long-forgotten Ten-pin Challenge has never actually ever seen a game of ten-pin bowling, let alone played the game. What is that bloke on the cover doing? If you threw a bowling ball like that you'd probably a) dislocate your shoulder b) be thrown out for making a dirty great hole in the alley and c) be ridiculed by your friends and never be able to hold your head up in public again. Actually, I think I've worked out what's happened here; that bloke was actually the cover star on a cricket game and they've just painted out the wickets and drawn in a few skittles instead. Whatever the truth, it's a well worthy winner of the coveted Naff Cover Of The Month Award.

Andy O, cinema critic

This month our cinema critic, Andy O gives his expert opinion on the Cannon Cinema, Westgate Street, Bath

"Nice and roomy but the sound is always completely nob."

10 films they never bothered making games licences of

- 1 *The Bodyguard*
- 2 *Boxing Helena*
- 3 *Gone With The Wind*
- 4 *Alfie*
- 5 *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover*
- 6 *Eraserhead*
- 7 *Grease 2*
- 8 *Sleepless In Seattle*
- 9 *Clockwork Orange*
- 10 *Carry On Camping*

Where Was That Again?

Compiled lovingly by AA's all-new Sarah Tanser, here's the definitive list of probably the weirdest addresses of our readers...

- 1 Braintree
- 2 Lower Dexbeer, Pancrasweek, Holsworthy
- 3 Appletreewick
- 4 Whirlow, Sheffield
- 5 Stalybridge, Cheshire
- 6 Brandleholme
- 7 Lamlash, Isle of Arran
- 8 Wanganui, New Zealand
- 9 Frederiksborgvej 25, DK3600, Frederikssund, Denmark
- 10 Hareleeshill, Lanarkshire

If you think they're bad, wait'll you hear where Dave comes from – Staines. Andy's hometown is also pretty stupid – Nailsea. I, myself, come from a town called Wigston (that figures – Dave), just a few miles away from Sarah's home town Oadby.

If you want to get in touch with us for any reason whatsoever (except to tell us that we're completely rubbish, that is) write to:

Amstrad Action,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.
You Know it makes sense.

AMSTRAD ACTION 98

Senseless Scribblings

Stand aside SF2 – virtuality hits the CPC!

That's right – you may have seen Craig Charles running round on telly doing a game show with it, or stood in an arcade watching someone act a complete prat by sitting in a perspex car shell and moving their head about for no apparent reason, but now you can make a complete idiot of yourself in your own home, with the VR system that pushes the CPC to its limits – *Virtual Finger*.

With just a VR finger sock, you too can now play such stunners as *Return of the Finger*, using CAD applications like *Pointmaster 2000*,

or (for the kids) join in with cartoon fun, playing *VR Fingermouse*.

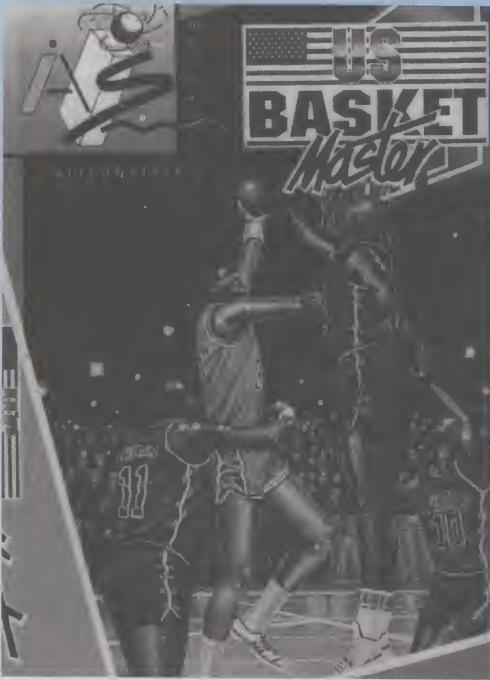
Due for release at a later date are titles such as *Advanced Auction Sim*, *Telephone Dialling*, *Bus Spotting*, and many more. When we get an update on the *Virtual Toe* package, we'll let you know.



And the VR company did say that if we printed any pokes for the games, they'd break all my knuckles (oh dear)...

Yet more wibble

Naff cover of the month award # 4



Now this one really appeals to me. For a group of basketball players, they really look quite cyberpunk, don't they? For a start, they're made almost entirely out of chrome, with the light from their legs (this also means that they must shave them) reflecting the light to almost painful proportions.

As if that wasn't enough, take a look at the guy at the very front – how does he do that? The way I see it, unless he's got a pair of rocket boots, there is no way on Mary's little planet he can achieve those kind of heights without enough space between his knees to fit a particularly thin credit card.

So for all those who haven't quite mastered the art of motion drawing yet, take heed, as *US Basket Master* gets cover of the month. Thanks a lot, Alternative.

If you want to get in touch with us for any reason whatsoever (except to tell us that we're completely rubbish, that is) write to:

Amstrad Action,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.
You Know it makes sense.

Andy O, wine taster

This month our cinema critic, Andy O gives his expert opinion on Simon's mother's home made wine.

"This stuff is like vinegar. I think I'll go and lie down for a while now."

10 ridiculous game character's haircuts

1 Rodland

2 Rik The Roadie

3 Rainbow Islands

4 Myth

5 Dizzy (the actual character we're talking about is Denzil)

6 Tintin

7 Prehistorik 2

8 Grell & Fella

9 Antiriad

10 Advanced Hairy Happening Sim

Hands off my mag, you!

It's been quite a while since we hassled you about reader action – it's about time we repeated ourselves.

So, for all of you who weren't around at issue 91, the situation is this:

Amstrad Action is your mag; we cater to the tastes of our readership, because they're the people who're in fact paying our wages. Therefore, it makes sense if you get the most out of this mag. All you have to do, then, is write to us, with letters marked "Hands off my mag!" to the usual address, stating what you like and dislike about the mag. It does go a lot further than that, though, as we'd also like constructive suggestions about how you'd like us to make the mag better in your eyes.

Everything you write will be read by Dave, who'll be taking every suggestion on board.

We want to hear from you!

AMSTRAD ACTION 98

AMSTRAD ACTION

SUBS' CLUB

THE BIG ONE-OH-OH

Party time! We're one hundred issues old. They say you should never look back but in an issue like this, you just have to get nostalgic. That's why you'll see loads of old faces cropping up. Plus, one glance at our centre pages and the memories'll come flooding back.

And here's a really amazing (make that completely duff) fact. At the time of writing this the combined ages of the four AA crew - Simon, Clur, Andy and Dave - work out to exactly one hundred - 31, 24, 26, 19. We'll leave you to try and work out who's what age. See you next month. **Dave**

Here's a turn up for the books. AA gets a new writer without losing one. Well sort of. Y'see Simon has been split in two and divides his sarcasm between two mags, AA and our sister 8-bit mag Commodore Format. So to help out with the writing chores we've drafted the delectable Clur Hodgson, a curvy red-head who... oooof! (Cut the sexist comments or the next time it'll be aiming about a foot higher than your shins - Clur) Er, yeah, so now we've Clur who's got a degree in maths, is a long time 8-bit fan and has a frightening left hook.

Clur will be handling the covertapes, the games reviews and the odd feature as well as introducing a Beginners' Guide To BASIC, hopefully next issue. Simon will still be doing all the heavy duty techy stuff, but now that Venture Forth has come to an end, he has a few plans for some exciting one-off features including an animation special and complete Guide to CPC music. Stay tuned.



A rare photo of Clur's (failed) audition for Casualty (we would have given her the part).

Defection to Australia

What's a picture of a MegaDrive magazine doing in our precious Subs' Club, then. Well it's the answer to a question a lot of you might be asking following our History Today feature this issue. What has happened to Adam Waring. He's become a defector. He now edits a (spit) MegaDrive magazine. But it's not one you'll find in your local shops - unless you're one of our Australian readers, that is. That's because *MegaZone* is an Australian mag.

Strangely, Adam never refers to his pommie roots in the magazine and even goes as far

as to stress it's true Australian-ness and how they don't want to be influenced by UK computer mags in his answer to one letter. Hmm...



Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month:

Adverts	Dave	The girl with the VW Beetle who drinks Nescafé
	Andy	Jack Dee's one
	Simon	Wash'n'Go
	Clur	The baby in training pants who pulls them up and down
Yoghurts	Dave	Greek style honey flavoured
	Andy	Don't like yoghurt
	Simon	Kebab flavoured
	Clur	Chocolate fromage frais
Singles	Dave	Kraft Dairylea
	Andy	Leftfield Lydon - Open Up
	Simon	Ave Maria
	Clur	Front 242 - Animal
Shop	Dave	Forbidden Planet
	Andy	Rockaway Records, Newport
	Simon	Leather World
	Clur	Paper Chase

Senseless Scribblings

Serious stuff

A few issues back we asked you what you wanted to see on the cover tape. The result was thousands of letters suggesting games, many of which we have got lined up are or trying to secure deals on. But what about serious software? Over the past dozen or so issues we have given away some stonking utilities and applications - word processors, spreadsheets, art packages and the like - but is there anything else you'd like to see? Is there a particular program or just a type of program you'd like to see? Now's your chance to let us know by writing in with your suggestions to the address below. You know it makes sense.

*serious
stuff*
ALADDIN

Genie-us

Have you seen Aladdin yet? Well at least 10 AA readers and their chosen victims have because they won preview tickets along with their FES tickets in our phone-in competition. Clur went along to the preview screening at Bristol on November 28th and she reckons it is one of the best films, let alone animated films, she has ever seen (but under that tough exterior there's a big softie purring away). We still can't convince Simon that it won't damage his image to pay to see a Disney film, though, but that's his loss.



Naff cover of the month award # 5



Be honest - seeing that kid's smug mug on the cover of this game from '87 is more likely to put you off buying it than splash out a few quid. I bet he's working on an Australian soap now (which demand acting out the same range of emotions which our cover star displays here - actually what does that expression convey; arrogance, sneering or 'how long have I got to stand here holding this stupid gun looking a right prat?).

The game is apparently set in the year 3010 but the cover evokes more of a 1950s feel when SF was all about oven-ready tin-foil suits, guns made out of old hair dryers, space ships that looked suspiciously like hub caps and lots of dry ice (a handy way of disguising the cardboard sets as much as possible). I suppose taking a photo of some kid you could pay by promising to let him have a copy of the game is cheaper than getting than getting artwork done for the cover. And I bet his mum's got it framed.

Here's a handy address:

**Amstrad Action,
Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.**

**Use it wisely, for it could be
the key to great knowledge
and wisdom.**

Andy O, on 'The Word'

"I try to avoid watching it as much as possible. And what happened to Katie? Her eyebrow scar was the best thing about the program. There's still the hope that Mark Lamarr and Terry Christian might end up having a fight on air."

Street Fighter 2 - The Invisible Edition

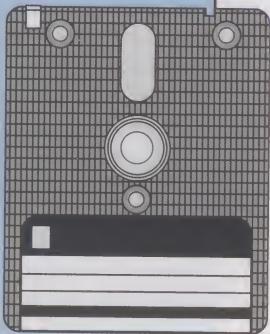
Well, it looks like we're never going to get to see Street Fighter 2 on the CPC. US Gold just seems to have given up on the whole idea. The December release date, it seems, was just a misprint on their schedules. Hah. I reckon the best thing now is for the CPC scene to take matters into its own hands. Rob Buckley of Radical Software already has an SF2-style beat-'em-up lined up for release in the new year called Lethal Moves and something tells me it could be quite a success in terms of sales. Let's show US Gold what an opportunity they've missed.

Psst... want some cheap disks?

Don't you just hate it when newies have good ideas? This Clur, she waltzes in, takes one look at the vast pile of old 3-inch disks and says, "If they're so scarce, why don't we sell them off really cheaply and give all the money to charity?" After some initial resistance based on the fact that we didn't think of it first, we decided that actually it was a really good idea.

Right so here's the deal - we'll bundle up the disks into packs of 10 and sell them for a fiver a pack. They'll be sold on a first come, first served basis - send cheques (made payable to Future Publishing Limited) to Cheap Disks, Amstrad Action, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

But what charity should we give to? We'll leave that up to you too. So, if you write in to the mag over the next month please tell us who you'd like us to give the money to. We'll announce how much we've made and who's going to get the money in the Subs' Club letter that goes with issue 102.



AMSTRAD ACTION 100

AMSTRAD ACTION



1994 and all that stuff

Welcome to the first issue of 1994, and we kick off with a storming issue that's got something for just about everybody who's got a CPC. If you're into games then not only is there the excellent Exolon on the covertape, but there are four pages of cheats (and there'll be even more next month), and previews of two games due for imminent release that look like being real stunners as well as the usual reviews, PD and adventures. With homegrown software improving all the time, I reckon that, on the games front, 1994 could be a vast improvement on 1993.

On the serious side of CPCing, 1993 wasn't at all bad, as Simon's review of the year in this issue shows, and there are some exciting new products looming, including the ROM-based desktop from Campursoft. There's even the possibility of the much-awaited hard-disk becoming a reality (see the

Quantum story elsewhere in this subs' letter). And in this issue of AA we've got loads of techy features to keep you happy. Besides the regulars - Assembly Line, Type-Ins and Techy Forum - there's a brand new BASIC tutorial (because you asked for it) and an extensive feature on getting things moving on-screen which Simon is rather proud of.

Amstrad Action has got some exciting plans for the next few issues as well. In the coming months we will be lifting the lid off the CPC to see what all those bit'n'pieces inside are for, presenting a complete guide to the CPC's sound capabilities (not just music), checking out some gallic software and introducing a classic games series for all you lot who keep writing in clamouring for more games coverage. We are, after all, here to serve, so keep those letters coming in so that we can keep on giving you what you want. **Dave**

Getting Elite loaded

It seems that some 6128 owners are having problems loading last month's covertape program, *Elite* (which is a bit of a shame, to say the least). Hopefully if you've sent your tape back to Ablex to be replaced you will have received a version that works with your brand of CPC. If not, don't panic, because there are a number of other simple ways to get around the problem.

The game works fine if you transfer it on to a disk so if you normally send off for the disk version you're okay. Alternatively, a tape-to-disk utility will correct the problem if you transfer the game to disk yourself.

Next month, we will be going into a bit more detail about this process using the tape-to-disk utilities we've given away on past

Amstrad Action covertapes (such as JL-Copy) for people who are having problems.

The final solution is to phone us up and ask us to send you out a brief listing plus instructions which you can type-in yourself to get the game running correctly. We will be publishing it in the magazine in full next month, but if you can't wait until then all you have to do is phone us up and we'll send out the listing free of charge.

We are sincerely sorry for any problems this has caused and we will do our darnedest to make sure that it never happens again. Don't hesitate to give us a ring here at the Amstrad Action office if you have any further difficulties with the tape. But most of all, play the game - it's superb.

Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month:

Fave character from M*A*S*H

Dave	Winchester
Andy	Hotlips
Simon	Radar
Clur	Any marine who, in the course of treatment, had to bare their bottom

Fave superhero/villain	Dave	Wolverine
	Andy	The Riddler
	Simon	Me
	Clur	The Incredible Hulk

Fave Slade single	Dave	Coz I Luv You
	Andy	Goodbye To Jane
	Simon	Hate them all
	Clur	Squeeze Me, Please Me

Fave crisps	Dave	Cheese and Onion
	Andy	Tomato Ketchup
	Simon	Prawn
	Clur	Beef

Senseless Scribblings

Everybody go "aaaahhhh"

When we asked all the past writers and editors what they were up to at the moment for our History Today feature last month, Tim Norris was a bit coy. The reason he was, "At home in front of the telly," was not because he's a lazy git, but because he's taking a break from full-time work to become a freelance writer. Why? Because he's just become a daddy for the first time, that's why.

Yep, just before Christmas Tim's other half, Jan, gave birth to a being which has come to be known as Jack. Ahhh, ain't that sweet. And he's the spitting image of his dad, don't you think? It must be those chubby cheeks.



Naff cover of the month award # 6



Hopping Mad is a game that has completely faded into obscurity. And is it any wonder with a cover like this? I mean, it looks more like someone's holiday postcard from Mexico than game packaging. Where's the action? Where's the movement? Where's the excitement? Probably in the El Banana Boom Boom night club just down the road from the beach.

And check out the way it's all pixelated. I suppose this might be an attempt to make it look more like a computer game. Well, it does. A crap computer game. The sort of computer game that's so bad the terminology has yet to be discovered to describe how utterly appalling it is. A real *Count Duckula 2* of a game.

You should never judge a game by its cover, admittedly, but be honest - with *Hopping Mad*, are you prepared to take the chance?

Oh yeah, and what exactly is that sea horse doing crawling around on the beach in the blazing sun?

Here's a handy address:

Amstrad Action,

Future Publishing,

30 Monmouth Street,

Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

**Use it wisely, for it could be
the key to great knowledge
and wisdom.**

Andy O, on shop doors

How come, when someone wants to get out of a shop, and there are two doors, one of which is open, they always wait for people to stop coming through the open door rather than opening the other door and walking straight out? And vice versa. Weird.

Cheap disk update

The response to our cheap disk offer in last month's subs' letter has been astounding. We've never had such a packed mail bag. The problem is that about 20 times as many people have written in asking for disks as there are disks available, so there are going to be a lot of disappointed people. We did say last issue that they would be distributed on a first come first serve basis, which we'll stick to. So any requests we received after 5th of January (a mere two days back from the Christmas break) will not stand a chance. The rest will be put into a hat from which the winners will be drawn. Results next issue.

What's happened to Quantum?

A lot of you have been having trouble getting through to Quantum recently, because the phone line has been disconnected. Daniel Heapley of Quantum assures us that this is just a temporary problem and that in the meantime anyone wanting to get in contact with the company can do so by phoning Paul Fairman on 0446 736529. He apologises for any inconvenience also caused by the delay of deliveries of ParaDOS, but by the time you read this all copies that were ordered by the beginning of January should be on their way if they haven't arrived already.

Trakers

Trakers, the superb game from the Kennedy brothers which got a 92 per cent rating in AA95 is now available directly from the Kennedys for £5 if you send them along a disk with your order. Make cheques payable to either Gary or Scott Kennedy (take your pick). The address you need to write to is:

32 Lostock Road,
Seedley,
Salford,
Greater Manchester,
M5 2LH

AMSTRAD ACTION 101

AMSTRAD ACTION

SUBS' CLUB

From Fluff to the hard stuff

So, what happened to Fluff, then? WE told you last month that the review would be in this issue. It isn't. But, believe us, this is, in fact, good news. Why? Because the reason its release has been delayed is that Rob Buckley is spending just a bit more time on it to make sure that it really is as good as it can be before it's let loose on the CPC scene. But it should be ready in time for next issue (he says with crossed fingers).

Some of you may have heard rumours that Fluff and Lethal Moves may be made available on cartridge. We checked this out with Rob, and, sure enough, he is considering the idea, but



hasn't made any decision so far. We'll see...

Another rumour doing the rounds at the moment is that someone is in the process of setting up a rival CPC magazine; not a fanzine, but a real magazine that you'll be able to buy from the newsagents. Details are sketchy at the moment, but if

it comes off it can only be a good thing for the CPC scene in general.

Finally, it looks like the Quantum hard drive we mentioned a couple of issues back may become a reality. It should retail for around £150. Release date? Er, we'll let you know...

Yours sincerely, **Dave**

That disk offer

To call our cheap disk offer popular is the biggest understatement since Nero said, "Blimey, my fiddling's a bit hot today." We were over-subscribed by about 20. Everyone who sent in a plea for disks should by now either have received their disks (if they were one of the lucky few) or had their cheques returned. If you have not received either yet, please get in contact, but rest assured we will not have cashed your cheque if you are not going to receive any disks.

We managed to raise £220 for charity. The question was, which charity should we give it to? Sadly, events overtook us, and following the tragic

death of David Carter of Penguin PD (see this month's Amscene) who suffered from diabetes, giving the money to the British Diabetic Association seemed to be the best thing to do. Thank you everybody for your contributions, especially the people who sent in extra money just because they thought the sell-off was a good idea.



Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month:

Favourite Newspaper	Dave	The Grauniad
	Andy	Maximum Rock'n'Roll
	Simon	Trout Farming
	Clur	The Telegraph

Best US Comedy	Dave	Married With Children
	Andy	Married With Children
	Simon	Saved By The Bell
	Clur	Married With Children

Worst pop group	Dave	Lush
	Andy	East 17
	Simon	Bon Jovi
	Clur	Worlds Apart

Loathed BR station	Dave	Clapham Junction
	Andy	Temple Meads
	Simon	Victoria (the Casey Jones Burger Bar there, specifically)
	Clur	Crewe

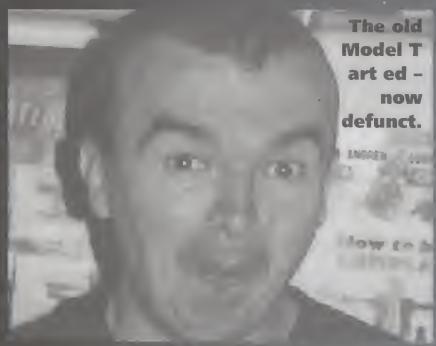
Senseless Scribblings

It's in the stars

Thanks to Angela Cooke who has sent us all character assessment based on our star signs. Apparently amongst Andy's ideal jobs are actor, film star, chairman, director, monarch, lighting specialist, orange grower, lion tamer, heart specialist, banker, goldsmith and vet. Nothing there about art editing ST Format. Odd that.

Out with the old and in with the Lisa

After seven glorious issues of Amstrad Action, Andy 'Aging Punk' Ounsted is moving on. Issue 102 is his swan song, and like the six



The old Model T art ed - now defunct.

issue that have gone before, it is a modern masterpiece, a multicoloured commentary on modern society in 60 pages. Or something like that.

Anyway, the rotten little traitor is off to an ST magazine, so wish him luck - he'll need it. The question is, who could replace him? Well, we had people like David Hockney, Jackson Pollack, David Bailey and Gerald Scarfe on the phone begging us to give them the job, but we had to turn them down. Why? Because we have discovered a young talent who is bound to go far and redefine the way magazines look forever (er, though we're not sure about that idea of hers of having the cover

on the back page). So, from next issue, your new art editor will be the gert lush Lisa Kellet, one of the West Country's finest. You have been warned.



Lisa in soft focus.
We're prepared
for the deluge
of fan mail.

Naff cover of the month # 7



If an infinite number of monkeys were given an infinite number of felt tip pens and sheets of cardboard and an infinite amount of time, they'd eventually create a cassette cover just like this one. At which point they would probably give up the exercise as a bad idea and go back to de-fleaing each other and making cameo appearances in Tarzan films.

As naff covers go, this is a masterpiece in understatement. None of elements are individually particularly awful, but the combined effect of the 1960s US sit-com family rendered in glorious second-rate comic-strip-o-vision, the appalling coverlines (yeah, like the fact that it's a great revision aid is really going to get your pulse pounding) and the lack of any information about what the game is actually like propel this cover into the ranks of the truly awful.

One question - why have both the men got their eyes closed? Perhaps those smiles are actually grimaces - maybe they've been playing the game.

Hmmm - I wonder what happened to Alligata software?

The top 10 Top 10

1 Formula One

2 Arkanoid 2

3 3D Boxing

4 4x4 Off-Road Racing

5 Five-a-side Football

6 Classix Axiens

7 720 Degrees

8 Alien 8

9 Italy 1990

10 Tenth Frame

Here's a handy address:

**Amstrad Action,
Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.**

**Use it wisely, for it could be
the key to great knowledge
and wisdom.**

AMSTRAD ACTION 102

AMSTRAD ACTION

SUBS' CLUB

From Fluff to the hard stuff

So, what happened to Fluff, then? WE told you last month that the review would be in this issue. It isn't. But, believe us, this is, in fact, good news. Why? Because the reason its release has been delayed is that Rob Buckley is spending just a bit more time on it to make sure that it really is as good as it can be before it's let loose on the CPC scene. But it should be ready in time for next issue (he says with crossed fingers).

Some of you may have heard rumours that Fluff and Lethal Moves may be made available on cartridge. We checked this out with Rob, and, sure enough, he is considering the idea, but



hasn't made any decision so far. We'll see...

Another rumour doing the rounds at the moment is that someone is in the process of setting up a rival CPC magazine; not a fanzine, but a real magazine that you'll be able to buy from the newsagents. Details are sketchy at the moment, but if

it comes off it can only be a good thing for the CPC scene in general.

Finally, it looks like the Quantum hard drive we mentioned a couple of issues back may become a reality. It should retail for around £150. Release date? Er, we'll let you know...

Yours sincerely, **Dave**

That disk offer

To call our cheap disk offer popular is the biggest understatement since Nero said, "Blimey, my fiddling's a bit hot today." We were over-subscribed by about 20. Everyone who sent in a plea for disks should by now either have received their disks (if they were one of the lucky few) or had their cheques returned. If you have not received either yet, please get in contact, but rest assured we will not have cashed your cheque if you are not going to receive any disks.

We managed to raise £220 for charity. The question was, which charity should we give it to? Sadly, events overtook us, and following the tragic

death of David Carter of Penguin PD (see this month's AmScene) who suffered from diabetes, giving the money to the British Diabetic Association seemed to be the best thing to do. Thank you everybody for your contributions, especially the people who sent in extra money just because they thought the sell-off was a good idea.



BRITISH DIABETIC ASSOCIATION

Office raves

The buzz in the AA office this month:

Favourite Newspaper	Dave Andy Simon Clur	The Grauniad Maximum Rock'n'Roll Trout Farming The Telegraph
Best US Comedy	Dave Andy Simon Clur	Married With Children Married With Children Saved By The Bell Married With Children
Worst pop group	Dave Andy Simon Clur	Lush East 17 Bon Jovi Worlds Apart
Loathed BR station	Dave Andy Simon Clur	Clapham Junction Temple Meads Victoria (the Casey Jones Burger Bar there, specifically) Crewe